Chronicles

July 2007

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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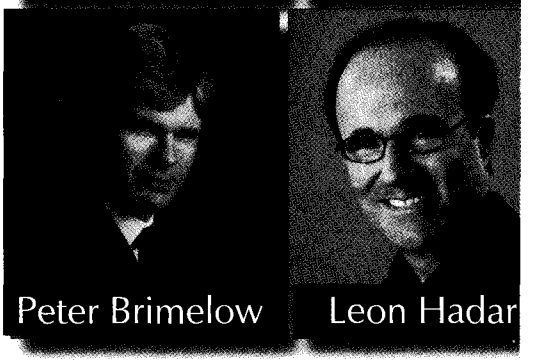

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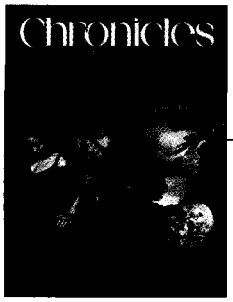

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On Tolstoy and Fiction

Andrei Navrozov's dispatches from Europe are always interesting and well written, but in "Love and Fiction" (*European Diary*, May), he makes a comment that could use clarification. According to Navrozov, Leo Tolstoy is not a writer like Orwell and Dostoyevsky, who drew upon personal experience to invest their work with vividness and verisimilitude. Orwell had been poor; Dostoyevsky had been a compulsive gambler; and, hence, both were in a position to write about those respective conditions. "But what did Tolstoy know besides being Tolstoy? What did he know of soldiering?"

Actually, quite a bit. Count Tolstoy was in Chechnya from 1851 to 1854 during the Russian army's incursion there, which was every bit as disastrous as more recent ventures in the very same region. In 1852, Tolstoy joined the Russian army and served alongside his brother Nicholai in raids against the strongholds of Muslim insurgents resisting control by Moscow. The Chechens are not bitter about Tolstoy's activities; on the contrary, a museum in Chechnya honors Tolstoy to this very day as someone who put his life on the line to understand Chechnya and to see at first hand the horrors of war unleashed by Moscow. No armchair soldier, Tolstoy later saw service in the Crimea. He wrote a number of acclaimed stories based on his wartime experiences.

I am surprised that Navrozov does not seem to care for Tolstoy. Besides rendering war vividly, with the help of his own experiences, one thing that Tolstoy's writing (particularly *Anna Karenina*) captures is the eternal conflict in the Russian character and society between the rigid, authoritarian strain, and the impulsive, romantic streak that could motivate someone to play roulette or to elope with a Venetian baker's daughter. Navrozov knows something about that conflict.

—*Michael Washburn*
Brooklyn, New York

Mr. Navrozov Replies:

"I could not start on the plates yet, because the water was cold," wrote Orwell, "and I had to fetch milk and make coffee, for the others arrived at eight and expected to find coffee ready. Also, there were always several copper saucepans to clean. Those copper saucepans are the bane of a plongeur's life. They have to be scoured with sand and bunches of chain, ten minutes to each one, and then polished on the outside with Brasso."

As the son of an English gentleman, and as an Etonian, the author of these lines belonged to a social stratum not very different from Tolstoy's a generation or two earlier; yet I dare say there was nothing in the Russian writer's life experiences to match the Englishman's headlong plunge into the dishwater of reality. Curiously, in such stories as "Father Sergius," Tolstoy understands that; he knows he is a toff, and whether a toff goes to war or takes the vows, his experience of the ultimate is filtered, softened, polarized. By contrast—like Tolstoy's fictional Father Sergius—Orwell was able to plumb the lowest depths as one who belonged there. Interestingly, his account of the Spanish War in Catalonia is so real that it makes war less dramatic or frightening than the unforgettable kitchen that "measured fifteen feet long by eight broad."

I thank Mr. Washburn for his kind view of my writing. It is significant, however, that, having spent some great portion of my life in the enchanted purlieus of comfort, I have now broken free and, unlike Tolstoy until the very day of his death, have done all I could to dismantle the filters and the screens that work—in theaters of war as in those of love—to soften the effect of brute reality upon the most perceptive or inquisitive of minds. It is not that I dislike Tolstoy; it is that his life and work are painful reminders of the commonplace truth that there is no substitute for experience. Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, like his war stories, may be a good show. But I can no longer afford the ticket, and besides, what I really want most these days is the fire marshal's view of it all.

On Will's Spoils

I am puzzled by one brief passage in Joseph Sobran's generally unimpeachable demonstration that George Will is no conservative ("Was George Will Wrong?" *The Bare Bodkin*, May). In

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the third paragraph, he points out that Will covertly implies that conservatives should "get over" certain things they do not like, including apparently the FDR quasisocialist legacy and the legalization of abortion, on the grounds that these have simply become too well established to be extirpated or reversed effectively. But included on this list is affirmative action, which Will is represented as calling a "racial spoils system," and on those grounds supposedly urging conservatives to accept it! Is there a level of irony I am missing here? Does Will really argue that we *need* a "racial spoils system?" Some clarification from the usually crystal-clear Mr. Sobran would be appreciated!

—*Jonathan Chaves*
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Sobran Replies:

Mr. Chaves is right. Will has always condemned affirmative action, and I am baffled that I could have said something so obviously false that nobody who knew Will's consistent record could have been deceived by it. I'm not sure what I was trying to say, but I must have gotten tangled in my line of thought.

Coffee Shop Impersonal

by Wilmer Mills

A Chinese woman and her waspy date
No doubt have read each other's personals.
They meet for several minutes, but it's late,
Alas: watch-glance-and-lifted-purse annuls
The moment long before they have to split.
They trade their cell-phone numbers on the spot
By calling one another where they sit;
Promise they'll get back in touch, or not.

Praying Hands

Berkeley, 1995

by Wilmer Mills

Workmen reach and prune the trees,
Old sycamores cut back in knotted
Postures, clasping knuckleless
As if in awkward prayers of angst.
I saw the same contorted gestures
At the market, Buddha citrons
Shaped like multi-fingered hands.
And near this place on Telegraph
Two nuns on tour from Europe bought
A porcelain hand in bird-position,
Saying, "See, the hand of God!"

It makes me careful how I pray,
Afraid that I have offered thoughts
While unaware of hand or gesture.
Posture doesn't matter, right?
But something lightens in my palm
And climbs when I have prayers to lift,
As now, with workmen reaching up
To prune, these club-fist mutilations
On the sycamores invite
A seeking motion, like Zacchaeus,
Hand over hand to life from limb.

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by Andrea Crandall

Plant and Ye Shall Find

The Bush administration says that Iran has "proliferated weapons of mass destruction." This time, Condi will make sure they can find some.

On March 28, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Henry Paulson, and Alberto Gonzales determined that Iran's military-industrial complex, the Defense Industries Organization (DIO), has contributed to the spread of "weapons of mass destruction."

To make sure that the WMDs don't evaporate this time, the United States has granted permission for Iran's primary missile supplier—the Chinese government—to receive restricted missile equipment and technology, as well as items on the United States Munitions List. In the past, Washington put sanctions on Chinese companies for selling missiles to Iran; today, it is vital to U.S. national security that Iran be well armed.

The latest superweapon of the Axis of Evil, the DIO, oversees Iran's military-production activities. Iran produces a wide range of weapons and chemicals, including missiles. Missiles are what "concern" Condi and her friends, because they are the easiest way for Iran to hit American/Israeli targets with chemical or nuclear weapons. Iran, like Israel and the United States, does possess chemical weapons (which are, officially, weapons of mass destruction). Unlike Israel and the United States, Iran does not have a nuclear arsenal, though considerable media resources have been employed in order to convince the West that Iran is a nuclear threat.

The DIO ultimately answers to the Iranian government, led by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. This chain of command makes it a perfect target, because Ahmadinejad has been carefully misquoted and maligned as an antisemitic lunatic. The DIO has even worked with North Korea to improve C-802 antiship cruise missiles. Could an enemy target possibly be more dastardly? In reality, however, Iran's defense technology comes, in large part, from Russia and China and is far below the caliber of American or Israeli weapons.

Iran is only a threat to someone stupid enough to hit her first. Stepping up to the plate, Washington has positioned itself for an offensive against Iran, in a bid to secure Iranian oil and Israel's financial future. The furor over Iranian WMDs is being drummed up as a pretext for war, much as the threat of "Saddam's WMDs" was used for the Iraq invasion. None of this is in the interests of the American people, who are watching their wages inflate away, while the Democratic Congress rolls over for the President's war.

Iran has good reasons for building strong national defenses. The country is circled by hostile factions and is sitting on the last great hydrocarbon energy reservoir. No fair-minded person could fault Iran for protecting her resources.

Moreover, Iran is surrounded by destabilized countries, which makes her vulnerable to attack. Opposition forces from Iraq or opportunistic insurgents from nearby countries (such as Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, or Pakistan) could take advantage of regional chaos to break off pieces of the state. Israel and Azerbaijan are using separatist movements among the Kurdish and Azeri minorities to undermine Iran's territorial integrity. (Azerbaijan sits on the Baku oil region and is crucial to U.S. energy interests.) Iran has good reason to fear military aggression.

The United States has worked to destabilize the region surrounding Iran and Russia. Apart from the disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Washington has encouraged the nuclear-arms race between India and Pakistan. The nascent "Flour Revolution" in Turkmenistan bears the hallmarks of American involvement. The objective of these maneuvers is to isolate Russia and Iran and preoccupy them with border disputes and internal-security concerns. With these states weakened, it will be easier to "negotiate" oil-export agreements favorable to the United States and Israel.

Washington is playing a wicked game with Iran, creating the circumstances in which Iran feels pressured to increase her defenses by purchasing weapons. Then, the Bush administration supplies those weapons, *via* the Chinese, only to use the existence of those weapons as a pretext for war.

For the United States and Israel, controlling Iran is a stepping stone to controlling Russia. Russia is a greater danger to U.S.-Israeli interests than Iran is, because Russia is richer and has more resources. America's contrived concerns over Iranian nuclear capabilities have already driven a wedge between Russia and a valuable ally in the Middle East. With Iran under U.S. domination, Russia will lose a buffer between U.S.-dominated Iraq and the Caspian Sea, as well as a friendly port on the Persian Gulf.

The subversive techniques used against Iran are also being used to spread chaos along Russia's borders. The corrupt regimes inaugurated by the Rose (Georgia), Tulip (Kyrgyzstan), and Orange (Ukraine) revolutions are old news: On February 27, the U.S. Treasury Department seized the assets of six top Belorussian officials, claiming they were "undermining democracy." Belarus is a traditional ally of Russia, and a U.S.-based "Belorussian" political movement has been trying to ignite a "Denim Revolution" there for some time. On March 19, President Bush decided that rearming Serbia and Montenegro "will strengthen the security of the United States and promote world peace." This declaration came after Washington ensured future wars there by letting Albanian Muslims persecute Serbian populations in Kosovo, destroy churches, and burn monasteries.

The greater goal of these efforts is to consume Russia with a wave of instability, making vulnerable a valuable Russian asset: Caspian oil. c

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OUR TERROR SANCTUARY

The "Fort Dix Six" may not be the smartest group of would-be jihadists we have seen, but their story should tell us something about how lax immigration and border-security policies put this country at risk.

The six Muslims were arrested in New Jersey in May, for plotting to attack Fort Dix, which is known as a staging area for troop deployments to Iraq, and other military bases in the area. One of six worked as a pizza-delivery driver and had scouted out the base. The group had acquired maps of the fort and had been practicing for the attack, including firing paintball guns and Kalashnikov rifles at a Pennsylvania shooting range. They fell under suspicion when one of them dropped off a videotape for transfer to DVD at a local retail store. A store employee watched the tape and called the FBI. According to the FBI report, the tape showed "ten young men" (where are the other four?) firing "assault weapons" at a firing range, calling for *jihad*, and shouting "*Allah Akbar*!" The FBI infiltrated the group, employing a paid informant to record the details of their plans, and used another informant to catch them attempting to acquire more weapons illegally.

So far, the FBI has not linked these men to any larger terrorist organization, but recent experiences with "Sudden *Jihad* Syndrome," in which Muslim immigrants unexpectedly lash out at the infidels around them, indicate that Muslims, whether attached to a "terrorist cell" or not, may be inspired to strike by the activities of more organized terrorist groups. The six men reportedly watched videos of attacks on U.S. troops, statements by suicide bombers and by Osama bin Laden, and various "terrorist training videos."

One of the six was born in Jordan and is a U.S. citizen. Another was born in Turkey and is a legal U.S. resident. The other four were identified as being born in the "former Yugoslavia" and as "ethnic Albanians"—most likely, Albanian Muslims from Kosovo. One is a legal resident, while the other three are illegal aliens. According to most accounts, an unnamed "federal law-enforcement source" says that the three Duka brothers—Eljvir (23), Shain (26), and Dritan (28)—are illegal aliens. When did they enter the United States? According to FOX News, that anonymous federal law-enforcement source says the three entered the United States near Brownsville, Texas, as children in the 1980's. The source also says that there is no record of them "entering by way of a regular border crossing." So, were they smuggled into the country? If so, when and where? Did the FBI track down their parents and ascertain the time and place of entry? And each of the three uses more than one name: Eljvir Duka is also known as Elvis Duka and Sulayman; Dritan Duka is also known as Distan Duka, Anthony Duka, and Tony Duka; and Shain Duka is also known as Shaheen. How can the authorities be sure just who these men are and how and when they entered our country?

It has become commonplace to read reports in the Texas press of aliens from all over the globe—including "special-interest aliens" from countries that have been identified as sources of terrorism—crossing the Rio Grande. Albanians are among those riding the tidal wave of illegals. Just last November, for instance, an Albanian illegal was killed when the SUV he was in—there were 11 passengers, including three other Albanians—rolled over near Falfurrias, Texas, along the border. The SUV was being pursued by the Falfurrias police.

The Duka brothers reportedly owned and operated businesses—Qadr Inc, Colonial Roofing, and National Roofing—out of their residence. They also had accumulated 19 traffic tickets among them. In a sane country, illegal aliens would not be allowed to operate a business, and a traffic stop would be an occasion for their detention and deportation. The Duka brothers were smart enough to operate in "sanctuary cities" whose authorities defy the law, not allowing local law enforcement to report the illegals to the feds. (Of course, given recent history, we could not expect the federal authorities to react even if the police had reported them.) Moreover, as Richard Miniter of the Hudson Institute commented, would-be jihadists are attracted to places with "diverse" populations—especially plenty of Muslims. "They are looking for places they can blend in," Miniter said. "They want to find the biggest anthill close to population centers where they can carry out attacks." Our government's immigration policies have created many such places. The state's refusal to carry out its duty to protect the country from invasion has left the border wide open for who knows how many jihadists to enter the country. And the reckless, unlawful, and suicidal impulse of the "sanctuary" movement has helped provide a base of operations for *jihad*.

Did I mention that Fort Dix welcomed thousands of Albanian Muslim refugees during the Kosovo crisis of 1999? At the time, one Army officer gushed that "We want to welcome these people to America the way we might wish our grandparents . . . had been welcomed to Ellis Island." Gen. Mitchell Zais didn't stop there: "[T]he American soldier is loved around the world for his compassion and generosity," he said. Is General Zais still in the Army? His attitude seems better suited for the misnamed Department of Homeland Security.

—*Wayne Allensworth*

THE GOP'S CLINTON

During the Republican presidential debate on May 15, Ron Paul, the constitutionalist from Texas, flatly stated that the terrorist attacks on September 11 were retaliation for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. Rudy Giuliani shot back a mendacious rejoinder: "That's an extraordinary statement, as someone who lived through the attack of September 11, that we invited the attack because we were attacking Iraq. I don't think I've heard that before, and I've heard some pretty absurd explanations for September 11th."

So Giuliani told a double lie—the falsehood that Paul had claimed that the war in Iraq inspired the terrorist attacks of September 11 (a chronological impossibility), and the greater absurdity that he'd never heard of the blowback theory.

If the Stupid Party does not want to lose the 2008 election, not to mention its tenuous hold on solid conservative voters, it had better think twice about nominating "America's Mayor" for president. A liar, an adulterer, and a leftist goon, Giuliani has already out-Clintoned Bill Clinton, and on many of the same low crimes and misdemeanors.

Topping the list of the goombah's infamous deeds are his sordid marital mon-

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keyshines. He dumped his first wife on grounds similar to those used by Henry VIII when he tossed Catherine of Aragon overboard. After 14 years of marriage, Giuliani "discovered" that his wife was a second cousin and received a declaration of nullity from the Church. He then married Donna Hanover, whose principal claim to fame was having wangled the lead role in an off-Broadway production of *The Vagina Monologues*. While married to Hanover, Giuliani jumped between the sheets with his next wife, Judith Nathan, the home wrecker who was prowling Gracie Mansion, the mayoral residence, before the mayor's second marriage ended. Hanover learned of her forthcoming divorce when Giuliani announced it at a press conference. Not surprisingly, Hanover accused Giuliani of "open and notorious adultery" and received a restraining order to bar Nathan from the mansion. At least Clinton has been down the aisle only once.

Also like Clinton, Giuliani has parlayed politics into tremendous wealth. In December 2001, just three months after the terrorist attacks, Giuliani opened a consulting firm, Giuliani Partners LLC. The original principals included Bernard Kerik, the former New York City police chief accused of ties to the Mob and guilty of misdemeanor corruption; a former priest accused of covering up sex abuse in the Diocese of Rockville Centre on Long Island; and an FBI agent who pilfered souvenirs from Ground Zero. According to a recent article in the *Washington Post*, the firm collected more than $100 million in fees over five years, and Giuliani became a multimillionaire. His clients "have included a pharmaceutical company that, with Giuliani's help, resolved a lengthy Drug Enforcement Administration investigation with only a fine; a confessed drug smuggler who hired Giuliani to ensure his security company could do business with the federal government; and the horse racing industry, eager to recover public confidence after a betting scandal."

For "someone who lived through" September 11, Giuliani is rather soft on illegal immigration. In the *City Journal*, Heather Mac Donald wrote that the man who would be president went to the mat to stop the federal government from enforcing the country's immigration laws. "Giuliani sued all the way up to the Supreme Court to defend the city's sanctuary policy against a 1996 federal law decreeing that cities could not prohibit their employees from cooperating with the INS. . . . The INS, he claimed, with what turned out to be grotesque irony, only aims to 'terrorize people.' Though he lost in court, he remained defiant to the end. On September 5, 2001, his handpicked charter-revision committee ruled that New York could still require that its employees keep immigration information confidential to preserve trust between immigrants and government."

Giuliani is also a staunch supporter of abortion. So wedded is he to the cause of infanticide that he claims it for conservatives. To justify legally murdering the unborn, he observed that "a strict constructionist" Supreme Court, out of respect for precedent, would never overturn *Roe* v. *Wade*. Of course, Giuliani is of the "personally opposed, *but*" persuasion, a reformulated version of the famous Clintonian locution "safe, legal, and rare."

Giuliani's personal life and leftist politics may explain his conduct when he was U.S. attorney in Manhattan. In that job, he railroaded "junk-bond" king Michael Milken and others for crimes they did not commit. As Paul Craig Roberts wrote, "Giuliani was unknown until in search of name recognition he staged a stormtrooper assault on the financial firm Princeton/Newport involving fifty federal marshals outfitted with automatic weapons and bulletproof vests. On another occasion, he had two New York investment bankers hauled off their trading floor in handcuffs. Giuliani's victims had done nothing and were exonerated."

This is the man the "Hannitized" Smear Bund of conservatives thinks should be president. So they mauled Ron Paul, the only candidate who understands the Constitution and what it was meant, and not meant, to do. The conservatives who backed George W. Bush for president can be excused, at least partly, because he, as McCain and Romney do today, told them lies to get elected.

To his credit, Giuliani hasn't done that. He's a liberal, and proud of it. So the conservatives who back him cannot be excused. If the GOP nominates Giuliani, "a small man in search of a balcony," as columnist Jimmy Breslin called him, the party may be more stupid than anyone thinks, but at least it would reveal the GOP for what it is and likely spell the end of its undeserved reputation as the political home for conservatives.

Come to think of it, maybe nominating Giuliani isn't such a bad idea after all. It would leave American conservatives homeless and give candidates such as Ron Paul a serious chance to compete for their votes.

—R. Cort Kirkwood

A COM FOR AFRICA

Ryan Henry, principal deputy under secretary of defense for policy, held a briefing on April 23 about the future opening of the new Africa Command (AFRICOM). It will join other U.S. commands that coordinate military and interagency operations for the Middle East, Latin America, Europe, and the Pacific. In her influential book *The Mission*, Dana Priest called the commanders of these regional headquarters "virtual proconsuls" in America's informal global empire. According to Henry, "The goal of AFRICOM is to support indigenous governments, not to assert U.S. primacy on the continent." AFRICOM will encompass 52 countries—every state on the continent except Egypt, which will stay within the Middle East's Central Command.

According to the briefing, "Africa represents about 35 percent of the world's land mass, about 25 percent of the world's population . . . [which includes] 400 million Muslims, 400 million non-Muslims—very significant amount of natural resource . . . but most especially a remarkable human potential on the continent." Yet, organizing the new command on the basis of continental geography rather than on a political and strategic basis is problematic. The Horn of Africa, which has been a radical Muslim hot spot, should have stayed in Central Command; the Mediterranean coastal states should have been left in the European Command.

The Bush administration is not alone in looking to expand its influence in Africa. A Beijing Summit on China-Africa Cooperation was held last November, following numerous visits to Africa by Chinese President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao, and Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing. President Hu made another trip to Africa in February.

The Washington-based Jamestown Foundation devoted the April 5 issue of its journal *China Brief* to Africa. Mauro De Lorenzo, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, noted in the lead article that "What distinguishes China's involvement in Africa from that

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of other nations is that it is accompanied by a clear government policy in support of African commercial ventures, abundant financing and tax benefits for Chinese firms operating abroad and robust diplomacy toward the region." Chinese interest, however, is focused on securing raw materials and energy supplies, not local economic development. Most of the increase in trade since 2000 has been oil imports from the Sudan and Angola. Beijing likes to call this "complementary" trade, paid for by Chinese exports of manufactured goods. But this is also the old colonial pattern that keeps the resource suppliers underdeveloped, while their fuel and metals go to support economic growth in China.

China has come under criticism for her protection of the Islamic Sudanese regime, which is waging genocide against non-Muslim Africans in Darfur. Beijing has used its veto power at the United Nations to block sanctions and limit the use of peacekeeping forces. Supplying weapons and training to regime forces and deploying substantial Chinese security troops to protect its investments undercuts Beijing's claim that it opposes "intervention" in Africa's internal affairs. It just opposes intervention by others. Beijing has also been arming the brutal, failed regime of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe.

In the late 19th century, there was a "scramble for Africa" among the major European powers. In the course of two decades, the entire continent was placed under European flags. Britain held the most lucrative areas, Egypt and South Africa, the latter attracting substantial white settlement. Despite investing much blood and treasure there, however, London's efforts returned little. Even in 1906, with the region fairly stable, Africa (including Egypt) was a market for less than ten percent of British exports.

Sub-Saharan Africa was a strategic backwater during both world wars. During the Cold War, the Soviets tried to exploit national-liberation movements to spread their influence. Fidel Castro provided Cuban troops to spearhead Moscow's efforts, but, instead of wealth and glory, the expeditions brought home only an AIDS epidemic.

In 2006, U.S. trade with Sub-Saharan Africa showed a deficit of $47.1 billion, with exports of only $12.1 billion against imports of $59.2 billion. Most of this trade was oil related, and with only two countries: Nigeria ($27.9 billion of imports against $2.2 billion of exports) and Angola ($11.7 billion of imports against $1.5 billion in exports). A two-way trade volume of $71.3 billion with this region is trivial out of a total U.S. world-trade volume of $3.6 trillion. Africa is still a poor, high-risk region, as the Chinese learned on April 24 when Somali rebels raided their oil field at Abole, Ethiopia, killing 74 local and Chinese workers.

At his briefing, Henry said "that AFRICOM was not being stood up in response to Chinese presence on the continent. It was not being stood up solely for the effort of enhanced counterterrorism, and it was not being stood up in order to secure resources." So why is this new command being created? It fills a gap on Pentagon maps, but it appears to have no strategic mission worth the effort. With American forces overstretched in regions of much greater value, it can only be hoped that Henry's claim that "AFRICOM does not mean the dramatic increase in resources to the African continent from the Department of Defense or from the U.S. government" will be firm policy.

—William R. Hawkins

BORIS YELTSIN, R.I.P.

On April 25, Boris N. Yeltsin, Russia's first postcommunist leader, was buried in Moscow. Many foreign dignitaries attended the funeral, praising the late president's achievements. U.S. Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton also bid farewell to their partner in dismantling the Soviet Union.

Yeltsin's death, seven years after his resignation at the dawn of the new millennium, underscores the striking difference between U.S.-Russian relations then and now.

To put into perspective how a great number of Russians regard their first president and his policies, imagine the governor of Illinois striking a deal with the leaders of New Mexico, Texas, and California and offering them support for their independence in order to oust his personal rival, the president, from the White House and take over the rump United States. Imagine, in addition, that he dissolves the U.S. Congress by sending in tanks, resulting in the deaths of over 150 citizens. These patriotic activities then lead to hyperinflation, wiping out the citizens' personal savings. The economy is now in shambles, and high-tech gives way to raw-material extraction. Silicon Valley infogeeks are escaping to China, Europe, and Brazil. Lucrative businesses are "privatized" and handed over to the president's cronies. His reformist economists attempt to fix the economy by not paying wages—for years. Law enforcement virtually disappears, and U.S. cities became the battlefields of endless gang wars. The life expectancy of men falls to 57 years.

Meanwhile, U.S. foreign policy becomes subservient to China, and American troops abroad are withdrawn in a matter of months and settled in the Mojave Desert. Washington renounces any interest in Americans abroad, so the Anglos of Phoenix and San Diego are forced to flee the newly independent states, penniless.

Replace the *United States* with *Russia*, and you'll have a moderate description of life under Yeltsin.

When communism was falling in the former Soviet Union, Russians were very positive toward the United States. Soviet anti-American propaganda was crushed by American pop culture. By the late 1990's, anti-Americanism was again on the rise, thanks to the bitter disappointment engendered during the Yeltsin epoch. In those troubled years, instead of suggesting a Marshall Plan for Russia, Washington encouraged Russian liberals to destroy the country's economy by adopting enlightened Harvard theories.

At the same time, Washington was constantly hailing the Moscow regime, and foreign support helped Yeltsin stay in power. So the Russian public got the message, loud and clear: Americans like Yeltsin because America enjoys seeing the Russians suffer. That is the joint legacy of Boris Yeltsin and his Beltway buddies.

—Egor Engelhardt

OBITER DICTA

Making his debut in these pages is our poet this month, **Wilmer Mills**. Mr. Mills lives in Sewanee, Tennessee, with his wife and two children, in a bungalow he built himself. His poems have appeared in prestigious magazines and anthologies. His collection *Light for the Orphans* was reissued in 2004.

Our cover and interior art are provided by our designer, **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.

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by Thomas Fleming

Ted's *Timor Mortis*

It was the second night of RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults), and Ted, the amateur catechist in charge of the class, was on a roll. The students were an odd lot of fallen-away Catholics, disgruntled Protestants who wanted to become Catholics, and men and women engaged to Catholics who objected to mixed marriages. Ted began by assuring the class that all religions pretty much worship the same God and teach the same moral code. A hand went up—the wise guy from the week before.

"What about suttee—you know, the Hindu custom that burned a wife alive with her dead husband?"

Ted allowed as how he did not know much about Hinduism and attempted to go on.

"What about Muslims who have four wives and think they go to Heaven if they murder innocent people?"

"I don't think you understand much about Islam. Of course there are fanatics, but the true Islam is a religion of peace that protects all people of the book, as they call Christians and Jews."

"You'd better not say that aloud in Iran or Pakistan. But what about Santeria and voodoo or the Aztec religious custom of slaughtering and eating young people?"

That was all the opening Ted needed. "I don't think we should continue this. Our Lord wants us to respect the diversity of all the peoples of the earth. Besides, we are hardly superior to the Aztecs: Up until not too long ago, most people, even Catholics, thought that it was all right to execute condemned criminals. In fact, the Church has always condemned capital punishment, though only recently, since Vatican II, has the Church spoken out clearly."

The wise guy thought about quoting the text of the catechism he had brought with him, but he had already said enough to turn the entire group against him. Why couldn't they go back to discussing Adam's belly button or the apparition of the Blessed Virgin on the side of a building facing U.S. 19 in Clearwater, Florida?

How had he ever managed to find himself taking instruction in the Catholic Faith from a liberal with a self-inflicted lobotomy? It was a long, strange journey. Brought up in a wholesome atheist home, he had learned from an early age to pity the weaklings who needed a mythical old man in a long beard to tell them what to do. Despite his sense of superiority, however, he had enjoyed none of the peace of mind or freedom from superstitious terrors that atheists (going back to Epicurus) had promised. As he later came to understand, the human mind, at any stage of development, is incapable of atheism, and the powers denied to a benevolent God are usurped by countless lesser deities, many of them malevolent. The great demons of materialism teach their worshipers to kill without mercy, while the lesser breeds of bogeymen—strange sounds in the forest, storm-twisted trees illuminated in a flash of lightening, and the sinister crow whose eyes followed him walking down the street—filled a child's soul with dread.

His greatest fear was of death. He did not remember when it began, but, even now, he could vividly recall lying awake, afraid to go to sleep for fear of not waking up. He was no older than five. This morbid imagination was stimulated by his sister, also an atheist until she was shipped off to a convent school, where her need to believe in something budded and bloomed. Nearly four years older, she delighted in telling long stories of animals that suffered tragic deaths before being plunged into the blackness of nonexistence. Her best story was of the fly he had just swatted, as they sat in the grass outside their family's unelectrified cabin on Lake Nabuchodonosor. It was a mother-fly, on her way to her children's birthday party—she had been out shopping for birthday presents when he so cruelly killed it. Her babies would never see their mother again, and they would die of hunger or be eaten by spiders.

Sometimes, the torture took the form of a litany: Their boxer, Blarney, was doomed to die; so was the neighbor's cat, Tommy; and all his favorite animal characters in *Comic Cavalcade*, including Fauntleroy Fox and Crawford Crow—they, too, would die some day, and so would he; and when you are dead there is nothing: No toys, no play, no fun, no ice cream, nothing; but, what made it worse, you would not even be aware that it was nothing, because everything you are or have ever been would be gone, and it would be as if you have never existed.

In her crude way, his sister had touched the wisdom of Homer. "Even as are the generations of leaves such are those likewise of men; the leaves that be the wind scattereth on the earth, and the forest buddeth and putteth forth more again, when the season of spring is at hand; so of the generations of men one putteth forth and another ceaseth." It is not simply that everyone in a generation will be dead but that they will be utterly gone and forgotten, like dead leaves scattered by the wind.

For the stout-hearted pagan, all that mattered was doing the glorious deeds that kept a name alive, the *klea andron* that Achilles sang, brooding in his tent. In later years, it was erotic passion that conferred the illusion of immortality in a dying world where the one reality, as Propertius said, was *una nox dormienda*, the one night that must be slept.

Pagans were not cowards, but post-Christian neopagans, as he and his sister were, fear death because it is the negation of everything—no toys, no fun, no candy, or, as a man might say today, no fast cars, no thrills, no women. While ancient pagan poets concluded from our mortality that it is best to live well and intensely, post-Christians flee from the one truth they have grasped and barricade their homes and even their

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bodies with the costly junk they live to buy, and their minds with dope, TV, and, best of all, the computers that keep them from hearing their heart beat out the tattoo of their mortality. The hours of unconsciousness spent on e-mail and the internet—or pornography or political ideology or pseudoreligious ecstasy—are stolen from the *timor mortis* that might otherwise sink them into a depression that Prozac cannot tranquilize nor Cialis rejuvenate.

For as long as he was an atheist, he opposed capital punishment—not just as a general principle, as he was opposed, for example, to Broadway musicals, New England boiled dinner, and telephone wires: He was seriously and passionately committed to the elimination of the death penalty. He became a great reader of Thoreau and Marcus Aurelius, and the teaching of the Stoics, combined with an acute fear of death, taught him that it was always wrong, for any reason, to take a human life. His adolescence was framed by the executions of Caryl Chessman (1960) and of Perry Smith and Richard Hickock (1965). Yes, he knew from the newspapers that Chessman was a serial rapist-murderer, while the crimes of Smith and Hickock, who had wiped out an entire Kansas family, were brought to life by Truman Capote in his novel *In Cold Blood*, published in the year of their execution.

He took little interest either in the details of the crimes or in the character of the killers, nor did he make the mistake of thinking that innocent men routinely land on death row, though he did spend a lot of time imagining how he would feel as an innocent man awaiting execution. What troubled him was the conviction that each convicted killer was a unique human being who would die before his time as surely as Fauntleroy Fox or Crawford Crow. Whatever they had done could not alter this reality. In every discussion of capital punishment—and there were many, mostly with adults—he was generally able to annihilate the usual arguments based on public safety. Chessman might have been kept in jail forever, and, if he represented a danger to prison guards or other prisoners, they could keep him in solitary. This line of thinking usually led the defenders of the death penalty into one of two traps. They either argued that life in solitary confinement was inhuman or complained about the cost. But, if solitary confinement was unendurable, why not give the condemned man a choice? He would not, to take a later example celebrated by Norman Mailer, have turned down Gary Gilmore's petition for a speedy execution.

Shock and outrage were his stock response to anyone who suggested that a price could be set on the value of a human life. What would he have said to the argument that executions are the only just response to certain crimes? He did not know, because, by the 1960's, defenders of capital punishment rarely talked about justice.

Two rather opposite events changed his mind. The first was a mugging he experienced in the Fillmore neighborhood of San Francisco. He was on his way with a friend, a former LSU lineman, to a Velvet Underground concert at a club called The Matrix. A crosstown bus broke down, and the driver told them to get off the bus and wait for another. About a dozen black "youths," hearing the change jingling in their pockets (the meager tips they earned as waiters in a pensioners' hotel), were drawn like sharks to a bleeding wound. They surrounded the young men and demanded their money. He started throwing change onto the street, in a vain attempt to distract them. Out of stubbornness, he had no intention of giving them the money he had worked so hard to earn. Besides, he was not about to give up the evening's entertainment.

One of the youths shoved a snub-nosed revolver into his side and said, "Look at my eyes, man. No pupils." Heroin, as Lou Reed would be singing in an hour or so, "It's my wife, and it's my life." A jab of the revolver: "You want to die for ten dollars?" Indeed, he did not. He was convinced he had only a minute or two more to live, because his friend the ex-lineman, a tough guy, was showing signs of discontentment. He could probably take out half of them with his fists. If he had not been stoned, he would certainly have made a move, and they would both be killed.

When a strange man approached them and quietly asked what was going on, the youth with the pistol told the stranger to go away, because it was none of his business. Opening his coat wide enough to reveal a badge and a holstered gun, the stranger asked them again.

"We just talking to our friend. Right, friend?" (Nudge with the gun.) "Right?" (Another nudge.)

Having nothing to lose, he said (and he still recalled, sitting in his chair in the church basement, every word): "I don't know. You don't usually ask a friend if he wants to die for ten dollars."

At that point, the youths fled, and the off-duty cop, who had been on the bus, chided the two of them for obeying the driver's instructions, adding, "I hope you don't expect me to go after them. They are probably all better armed than I am."

He and his friend proceeded to The Matrix, where they listened to Lou Reed celebrate drugs and narcissism, but, before the end of the evening, he realized something: He would have killed the muggers, if he'd had a gun. Not only that, but he now grasped the reason why, in the good old days, armed robbery—along with murder, arson, kidnapping, and rape—was a capital crime. In threatening his life, the youths had given him two options: Be their slave or die. He felt dirty, on the outside and on the inside, and for years had nightmares. Then, he went back to shooting and hunting, and the nightmares vanished.

The mugging taught him what a wise guy, as he thought of himself, should have known all along. Descended from a long line of violent men on both sides, he was anything but a pacifist. Nietzsche says somewhere in *Also sprach Zarathustra* that the son of a whoremaster should not try to become a monk. At the same time, he also became aware that a propensity to violence might be easily made a tool of evil. In a flash of anger, he had found himself willing to kill his attackers. What was there to keep him from killing those who merely insulted him or got in his way? He began to have violent dreams, and when he awoke, he knew the images that entered his mind were alien and evil. He had never believed in God, but now he thought he had heard the voice of the Tempter and seen his face. Reading the New Testament for the first time, he did

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not exactly believe. It was more that he wanted to believe in a world where beauty and virtue, even if they were only fictions, make sense. Perhaps it is not enough, but it is all he had.

In the long process of becoming a Christian, he underwent profound changes. His habitual melancholy faded, and, without noticing the loss, his chronic fear of death went away. It did not vanish because he suddenly believed he was going to a better place when he died. His faith was weak; he could never say with any confidence that he knew what happens to anyone after death. It is a great mystery that neither Peter nor Paul could entirely clear up. From the first, however, he had believed that, even if Christianity were a myth, it was a myth that made better sense of human life than any other myth, and that, in professing the Faith, he was joining the side of truth and justice, the only side that really mattered. Ironically, his belief in truth and justice came straight from his father, who, in rejecting the Church, had not rejected Her teachings.

Even more ironically, he now found himself listening to misinformation about capital punishment from a layman claiming to represent the Church of Augustine, Boethius, Thomas Aquinas, and Alphonsus Liguori. Arguing with Ted and his ilk was pointless, because they acknowledged neither logic nor historical fact. Their moral criteria derived from a nonjudgmental humanitarianism that is more a reflection of liberal sentimentalism than of Christian compassion. All the trite and jejune arguments he had used in his atheist youth—arguments, as he well knew, that had been spawned by the fear of death—were now trotted out as Catholic dogma. Even when he thought it was in retreat, the *timor mortis* had invaded the Church and taken hostages.

There was, after all, some glimmer of truth in the fear of death, in the reluctance to extinguish any human person, but for Christians (and, one might add, for Stoics and Platonists, Hindus and Muslims), the human person is not limited to an earthly dimension. For the Christian, this is not and cannot be "all there is." The Christian may not even bracket, for the sake of argument, Heaven, Hell, and eternity to focus attention on the here and now, because the here and now only has its true meaning when viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*. Better for the condemned man to face his guilt, accept his punishment, and confess his sins in the hope of forgiveness than to live out his life as a lie, carrying the burden of sins crying out for justice.

Of necessity, the Church has always called for mercy, sometimes for the worst of criminals; and of equal necessity, the Church has criticized criminal-justice systems whose punishments are cruel and unjust. Even in seeking to protect the innocent, however, the Church cannot repudiate the death penalty in principle without repudiating the God Who said, "Vengeance is mine," and handed the sword of His vengeance to the often flawed and corrupt rulers who wage wars and execute murderers.

Then who, he asked himself, was he to judge? If, in his youth, he had been a fool and a coward, how could he reproach others with folly and cowardice, and if he was wiser than he had once been, surely he would be a fool not to acknowledge that wiser men than he would justifiably lump him together with Ted. In the end, we are all, at our best, some version of Ted: sincere in our folly, cowardly and dishonest in maintaining the half-truths we have stumbled upon—or, to be more precise, which have stumbled upon us. And, in the endless procession of Teds—some knaves, some fools, some saints, and some popes—that is the Church, the truth will always win out. C

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by Joseph Sobran

The Atheist Renaissance

Atheists are feeling their oats these days. Three militant unbelievers—Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens—have recently hit the best-seller lists and talk shows. Not since Bertrand Russell have we seen atheism so prosperously married to celebrity. Why now?

Since the September 11 terror attacks, militant Islam has given ammunition to those in the secularized West who were already disposed to damn "religion" as such, without splitting too many hairs about fine distinctions between, say, Islam and popery.

Consider the mere title of Hitchens' polemic: *God Is Not Great: How Religion Spoils Everything*. The book won a laudatory lead review from Michael Kinsley in the *New York Times' Sunday Book Review* section, less for its content, which Kinsley barely touched on, than for its brilliance as a veteran contrarian's latest career move. Takes one to know one, I guess.

Kinsley was basically reviewing author, not book, saluting him on his successful strategy for winning publicity, the principle being that there is no such thing as bad publicity, by which rule the surly atheist has earned the fellowship of such devout men of the cloth as the Reverend Sharpton.

"God is not great"? "Religion poisons everything"? Is the animus here antitheistic, or just antimonotheistic? What does it mean? How, if at all, does it apply to Homer? Does "religion" ruin the *Iliad*? Or is the *Iliad* an object lesson of some sort, illustrating how the gods, or perhaps a belief in them not necessarily shared by the poet, incited the Trojan War (a quagmire if ever there was one, though the Greek attackers may have expected it to be a cakewalk)?

However that may be, Hitchens is telling us about his feelings, not his thoughts. Unlike Russell, he hardly purports to explain philosophically "why I am not a Christian," though he wants us to think he has philosophically sophisticated reasons for his comprehensive grudge. And unlike such more dispassionate unbelievers of an older generation as Rudolf Carnap and Anthony Flew, he doesn't bother with publicity-repellent, "value-free" analysis of abstract ideas and neutral propositions.

Religion and its votaries are bad, that's all. Look at all the wars it has caused. Not only that, it sometimes opposes war! Check out the last two popes' objections to the Anglo-American wars on Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Religion is no good, I tell you! Never mind that Hitchens himself has favored both wars. (Then again, some atheists haven't.)

And besides, to shift our focus just a bit, religion is notoriously hostile to Reason and Science. Does the name Charles Darwin ring a bell? Possibly you've seen the movie *Inherit the Wind*. Can you dig it? Give me that old-time irreligion: Reason and Science have spoken, with one conclusive voice.

Well, the truth of Darwinism may seem self-evident to liberal-arts majors, especially those who watch Animal Planet, but Hitchens appears blissfully unaware, as they say, of what can be (and has been) said by critics of the idea. Of these, my favorite is the late Australian philosopher David Stove, himself an atheist, who finds Darwin's thesis not only false but absurd on its face, "a ridiculous slander on human beings." Stove's book, *Darwinian Fairytales*, makes a scathingly witty attack on the very premises that the Darwinists assume to be impregnable.

Stove's argument is startlingly simple: If Darwin's theory of a "ruthless struggle for survival" among human beings were true, the human race could never have existed. Human life just isn't like that. Period. Every human being depends on parental care and protection until near-maturity. Without these, obviously, none of us could survive. Man is, and must be, a cooperative creature.

To meet this clear objection, Darwinists appeal to prehistory: Man, they admit, is cooperative now, but was not in primitive times. This won't do, Stove replies. Apart from the sheer absence of evidence, Darwinism is a "universal generalization," purporting to be a scientific law, true in all times and places. So if it was ever true of man, it must still be true today, and we see clearly that it isn't. Therefore, it was never true.

Stove disclaims any special scientific knowledge and never appeals, for example, to the fossil record. He merely applies linguistic analysis to Darwin's claims and shows their vacuity and incoherence. He also makes short work of such dodges as Dawkins' "selfish genes" and "memes." The holes in Darwinism can't be patched.

Speaking of overgeneralizations, Hitchens' indiscriminate assertions about "religion" instantly raise the suspicion that he simply doesn't know what he's talking about. How could so many accusations, against so many disparate things, possibly be true? Is the religion of the ancient Hebrews indistinguishable from the religion of the Aztecs? Are Hindus hard to tell from Unitarians? Is there no essential difference between the thought of Jonathan Edwards and that of John Henry Newman?

Another of Hitchens' reviewers, Stephen Prothero, author of *Religious Literacy*, remarks, "I have never encountered a book whose author is so fundamentally unacquainted with its subject." Hitchens appears to be a total stranger to any form of religious experience. Does he even realize what he's saying? He's like a blind man discussing Renaissance painting—and condemning all of it in clichés he has overheard.

Besides being ignorant of his subject and wrong about it, Hitchens is preposterously self-congratulatory. Whereas believers are "literal and limited," atheists (such as himself) are "ironic and inquiring." What about Stalin and Kim Jong-il? They're not true atheists, you see, since, as Orwell says, "a totalitarian state is in effect a theocracy." Thus, Hitchens rigs the whole debate.

Why shouldn't he? "If God does not exist," as Ivan Karamazov says, "everything is permitted," including calumniating believers. Hitchens does believe in most of the Christian virtues, after all; he merely insists that only atheists actually practice them. ·c

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Americans Don't Die!

Casualties, From Republic to Empire

by Roger D. McGrath

Americans do not believe in death. At least, they live as if they will never die. This has been the case from colonial times. It is a consequence of seemingly limitless opportunity and a drive for upward mobility, denied to generations of Europeans. Indentured servants, laborers, persecuted minorities, and peasants tilling the soil of the manor became landowners in America. This ignited an insatiable desire for all the material gain and status possible. An American was not condemned by custom and law to serve out his life in a particular role: He was master of his own fate. "We have been told," wrote Alexis de Tocqueville, "that the same man has often tried ten estates. He has appeared successively as merchant, lawyer, doctor, minister of the gospel. He has lived in twenty different places and nowhere found ties to detain him." Like other oppressive relics of European society, death would be left behind. Tocqueville noted that "Americans cleave to the things of this world as if assured that they will never die."

Americans also rejected the notion that suffering and dying for a ruling aristocracy is part of one's fate. In fact, most Americans rejected the notion of a ruling class altogether. Describing Americans, Francis Baily, a British visitor during the late 1790's, said that "the means of subsistence being so easy in the country, and their dependence on each other consequently so trifling, that spirit of servility to those about them so prevalent in European manners, is wholly unknown to them." This was especially pronounced on the frontier. "There is nothing in America," said British traveler Charles Murray during the 1830's, "that strikes a foreigner so much as the real republican equality existing in the Western States, which border on the wilderness." At the same time, Michael Chevalier, sent to America on a fact-finding mission by the French minister of the interior, noted that "There is in the West a real equality, not merely an equality to talk about, an equality on paper; everybody that has on a decent coat is a gentleman." Even the way Westerners walked was notable. "The clumsy gait and bent body of our peasant is hardly ever seen here," said an Englishman, "every one walks erect and easy." John Wayne was already in evidence.

From the California gold fields, Dame Shirley wrote that a sourdough could

> Enter a palace with his old felt hat on—
> To address the King with the title of Mister,
> And ask the price of the throne he sat on.

The contrast with Europe repeatedly surprised and even shocked visitors. An Englishman who demanded that he be addressed as Esquire found that, within a few days, everyone was calling him Charlie. A supercilious scion of English nobility was told by a cowboy in Kansas, "You may be a son of a lord back in England, but that ain't what you are out here." Another cowboy added, "It's what's above ground, not what's under, that we think on." An Englishman traveling in Wyoming asked a cowboy if his "master" was at home. "The son of Baliel ain't been born yet," came the reply. A titled Englishman on a hunting expedition out West had brought a bathtub along in his baggage train. When he ordered one of his outfitters to fill it, he was told to take a swim instead. When he again demanded that his bathtub be filled, the outfitter shot the tub full of holes, saying, "You ain't quite the top-shelfer you think you is, you ain't even got a shower-bath for cooling your swelled head, but I'll make you a present of one, boss!"

All this meant that Americans were not ready to offer unquestioning obedience to anybody, including superior officers in the militia. Abraham Lincoln learned this in the Black Hawk War. When Black Hawk and his band of Sauk and Fox crossed the Mississippi into Illinois, Lincoln and dozens of others from New Salem and nearby communities formed a militia company. One of the volunteers nominated Lincoln for captain; another proposed William Kirkpatrick, a mill owner. Some of the volunteers later said they chose Lincoln because they would be able to do as they liked under "Abe." The first order Captain Lincoln issued was answered with, "Go to the devil, Sir!" Lincoln found that he had to cajole, bully, and fight his own men to get any kind of obedience out of them. The militia was on active duty for one month. Lincoln then enlisted in another militia company as a private and served for three weeks, followed by a third enlistment in another militia company—again, as a private—for three weeks. Apparently, one attempt at leading a company of frontier militiamen had been enough.

The Texas Rangers were nothing more than a frontier militia until the early 1840's, when they were formally organized and stationed at San Antonio. Even then, they retained their informal and volunteer characteristics. Uniforms with gold braid, to distinguish officers, were tossed aside. Evidence of rank was difficult to find. When the Mexican War erupted in 1846, the Rangers were attached to the U.S. Army under Gen. Zachary Taylor at Fort Brown in the southern tip of Texas. When Taylor's army crossed into Mexico at Matamoros, the Rangers led the way as scouts and guides. Initially thrilled to have the veterans of many a Comanche battle with him, Taylor learned that the Rangers had little respect for rank and were all but uncontrollable.

In an impromptu Ranger Fourth of July celebration in Reynosa, General Taylor found the Texians washing down barbecued Mexican pigs and chickens with two buckets of

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whiskey. When he asked them how they came into possession of the animals, they said they had killed them accidentally while firing salutes in honor of the day. Calling them "licentious vandals," he threatened to jail the entire regiment. He knew he would not, though, because they were the best fighters in his command. Moreover, he could not turn to their officers—Jack Hays, Ben McCulloch, Sam Walker, and the others were just like the men they led. If the Rangers were a problem for Taylor and, later, for Gen. Winfield Scott, they were more of a problem for the Mexicans, who called them *Los Diablos Tejanos*. Any death of a Ranger was avenged tenfold or more.

From the War for Independence on, Americans have come to the battlefield more as militia—citizen soldiers of a republic—than as regular army. This has meant that Americans have never failed to question their leadership, let alone die by the thousands without a compelling reason. Today, in defense of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, there are those who dismiss our losses by reminding Americans that fewer than 4,000 killed and 25,000 wounded are nothing compared with the more than 400,000 dead and more than a million wounded in World War II. This misses the point, however. The Japanese launched a sneak attack that killed some 2,400 Americans and wounded another 1,200 at Pearl Harbor (numbers that should be tripled to adjust for the differences in population from then to now). That is why Congress declared war on Japan the following day: We had to avenge Pearl Harbor; we had to go to war. There was but one dissenting vote in Congress—that of Montana's Jeannette Rankin—and the American people were nearly unanimous in supporting the declaration.

Even during World War II, though, costly battles were questioned by the public, the press, Congress, and the troops themselves. Tarawa is but one example. The principal action at the Tarawa atoll was on the island of Betio. The Japanese commander there, Keijo Shibasaki, bragged that a million Marines in a hundred years could not capture the island. Shibasaki had good reason for his confidence. Betio, only two-and-a-half miles long and at no point more than a half-mile wide, was defended by some 5,000 Japanese troops, all in fortified positions. The Japanese had artillery pieces, including eight-inch guns they had taken from the British at Singapore, antiaircraft guns, cannons and mortars, coastal guns and machine guns, antitank guns, mines and tank traps, concrete blockhouses with walls five-feet thick, 500 pillboxes, and an airstrip. For its size, Betio was the most heavily fortified position in the world.

Moreover, the tides at Betio would rise and fall at uneven and unpredictable rates in a shallow lagoon. The reef lay 800 yards offshore. On the morning of November 20, 1943 (D-Day), high tide was supposed to provide a depth of five feet, barely enough for a fully loaded Higgins boat to clear the reef. There was no margin for error. Amphibious tractors, rather than Higgins boats, were needed, but the Marines had only 75 ready to go, and the Navy would not supply any more. In a planning session with the Navy, Marine Maj. Gen. Holland M. Smith—known as "Howlin' Mad" Smith—exploded: "No amphtracs, no operation!" The Navy said it would supply more amphtracs, but only enough to ferry Marines from the Higgins boats should any of them run aground.

Early on the morning of D-Day, naval and aerial bombardment of Betio began. It looked impressive but did little damage to the Japanese, who were firmly entrenched in reinforced concrete bunkers. Howlin' Mad thought there should have been round-the-clock bombardment for a week. The bombardment was lifted well before H-Hour, 0900—giving the Japanese ample time to recover—and the first three waves of Marines, in amphtracs, headed for the beach. At 4,000 yards from shore, they were greeted by Japanese artillery shells, then by coastal guns and mortars at 2,000 yards. At 1,000 yards, the Japanese began raking the Marines with machine-gun fire. At 800 yards, the surviving amphtracs hit the reef, but their treads carried them up and over the coral and into the lagoon. Some amphtracs seemingly vaporized when hit by artillery shells. "It had been there," described a Marine who watched an amphtrac take a direct hit, "and then suddenly it was not. In its place, for a split second, there was a blur in the air, and then there was nothing."

Americans, as citizens of a free republic, have never believed that it is their duty to genuflect before superiors, to follow incompetent leaders blindly, to perish for secret designs, or to die in vain. That is for the subjects of an emperor, a czar, or a king.

By 0910, the first amphtracs reached the beach. In the face of murderous fire, Marines threw themselves out of the amphtracs and scrambled across the sand to a low coconut-log seawall. The beachhead was but ten yards wide. Marine casualties mounted.

Meanwhile, the Higgins boats began hitting the reef and, unlike the amphtracs, ground to a halt. Marines could do nothing but leap from the foundering boats and push through the water toward shore. A Navy pilot overhead looked down and later recorded, "The water seemed never clear of tiny men, their rifles held over their heads, slowly wading beachward. . . . They kept falling, falling, falling . . . singly, in groups, and in rows. I wanted to cry."

On shore, the Marines tenaciously clung to a narrow strip of beach. One group of Marines, led by Maj. Michael P. Ryan, got off the beach, overran several Japanese positions, and penetrated several hundred yards inland. Lacking flamethrowers and TNT satchel charges, and having no communication with other units, Ryan was eventually forced back inside Marine lines at the beach.

By midday, hundreds of Marines had been killed; hundreds more, wounded. Some units had lost most of their officers and senior NCOs. A few units had lost nearly everyone. At 1330, Howlin' Mad, aboard *Pennsylvania*, received the ominous message, "Issue in doubt." He immediately released the reserve. On Betio, 1st Lt. William Deane Hawkins, Sgt. William Bordelon, and Lt. Alexander Bonnyman were earning the Medal of Honor. None would live to receive it.

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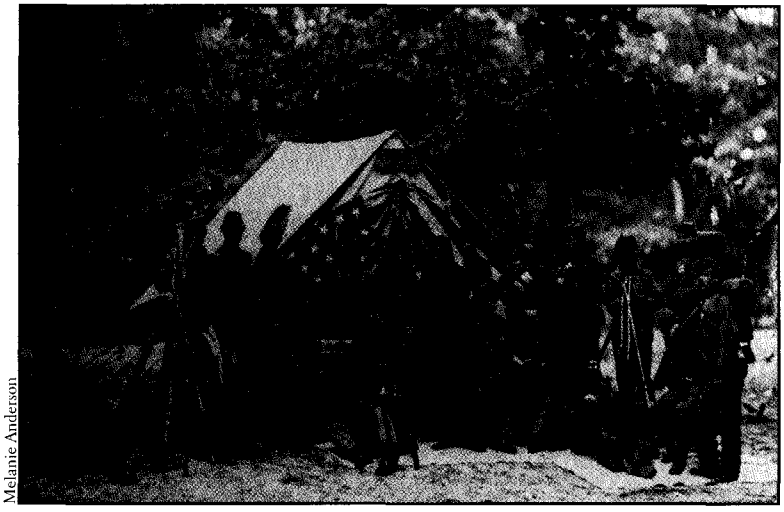
Fighting raged for three days before the 290 acres of hell that was Betio Island was declared secured by the Marines. The cost for such a small piece of real estate was stunning: The Marines had almost 1,100 killed and 2,300 wounded. The Japanese lost nearly every one of their 5,000 men.



Melanie Anderson

At 1800 on D+3, Col. David Shoup, the Marine commander on Betio, was greeted by his relief, Col. Merritt "Red Mike" Edson. "Dave, you look like you've been hit by a tank," exclaimed Edson. Shoup was bleary-eyed, bloody, and bearded. He had gone 60 hours with almost no sleep, had refused evacuation despite being wounded, and was in the thick of battle from beginning to end. His leadership had helped keep the Marines from faltering. He was awarded the Medal of Honor. Shoup would end his career as a lieutenant general and commandant of the Marine Corps (1960-64). He became a sharp critic of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. He knew something about losing good men.

Before, during, and after the battle, the necessity of capturing Tarawa was questioned. The slaughter was graphically described in newspapers across the nation. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* gave the battle front-page coverage. Holland Smith was quoted as saying that the assault at Tarawa was like Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg. He later announced, "Tarawa was a mistake!" Edson remarked that the Marines "paid the stiffest price in human life per square yard." Col. Evans Carlson, leader of Carlson's Raiders, said he saw a hundred Marines killed in five minutes as they tried to get ashore on the second day. Gen. Douglas MacArthur wrote to Secretary of War Henry Stimson, "These frontal attacks by the Navy, as at Tarawa, are a tragic and unnecessary massacre of American lives." MacArthur later told President Franklin Roosevelt, "Frontal assault is only for mediocre commanders. Good commanders do not turn in heavy losses." Letters poured in to the President and to Adm. Chester Nimitz, commander of U.S. Naval forces in the Pacific. One woman accused Nimitz of "murdering my son." Several congressmen called for a special investigation. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox was forced to call a press conference to defend the assault. He blamed "a sudden shift in the wind" for causing less water to cover the reef.

Col. Red Mike Edson was brought home by the Corps to defend the operation at Tarawa publicly. He was both a logical and ironic choice to do so. Edson had been awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic defense of Bloody Ridge on Guadalcanal; his name was widely recognized; he was articulate; and he looked every inch a Marine. However, he had opposed the tactical plan to assault Tarawa during planning sessions and felt the Navy was not fully supporting the Marines. Nonetheless, Edson accepted the mission, and the Corps selected him for promotion to brigadier general.

Standing in front of a map of Betio Island in the office of the commandant in Washington, Edson addressed a large group of reporters. He said that the Marines had known about the unpredictable tides and, accordingly, had used amphtracs. Moreover, he claimed, most of the Marine casualties had occurred ashore in savage fighting that was a consequence of the fanatical Japanese. "I think the American people should realize the psychology of the people we are fighting—to make the campaigns as costly as possible because they don't believe we can take it," he concluded.

Edson's last line struck a chord. Newspapers and magazines began to describe Tarawa as a great victory that demonstrated the kind of courage and fortitude it would take to fight our way to Japan. *Time* declared that the name Tarawa would "stand beside those of . . . the Alamo, Little Big Horn, and Belleau Wood." Author William Manchester was a young Marine in the Pacific at the time. "The comparison of Tarawa with the great battles of the past," said Manchester, "didn't impress most of us; we saw it for what it was; wartime propaganda designed to boost the morale of subscribers, a sophisticated version of rhapsodies about the Glorious Dead, who had Given Their All, making the Supreme Sacrifice. Our sympathies were with those who protested the high casualties."

Some of the most poignant, powerful, and graphic wartime footage was shot by combat cameramen on Betio. The footage was edited and titled *With the Marines at Tarawa*. Because the carnage was so graphically captured, President Roosevelt hesitated in having it released for viewing in movie theaters. He asked Robert Sherrod, the famous war correspondent who had been with the Marines at Tarawa, what he thought. Sherrod told the President that Americans at home had little idea about the nature of the Japanese enemy and the horrors of the war in the Pacific, and that the documentary must be released. The President was convinced. *With the Marines at Tarawa* played to packed theaters and won the Academy Award for Best Documentary. Sales of war bonds soared. Enlistment in the Marine Corps dropped 35 percent.

In 1948, Gen. Holland Smith's memoirs were published. He called Tarawa a mistake from beginning to end, a futile sacrifice, and "a terrible waste of life and effort." Others argued that there had to be a Tarawa—that the lessons learned there were invaluable. Smith said the lessons learned came at a price too dear and that Betio Island could have been leapfrogged as was done so many times before and after the campaign for Tarawa atoll.

When pundits today cavalierly remark that Americans stoically accepted enormous casualties during World War II, it might be good to remind them of the public reaction to Tarawa—and to many other battles during the war. Americans, as citizens of a free republic, have never believed that it is their duty to suffer misuse at the hands of the government, to genuflect before superiors, to follow incompetent leaders blindly, to perish for secret designs, or to die in vain. That is for the subjects of an emperor, a czar, or a king. c

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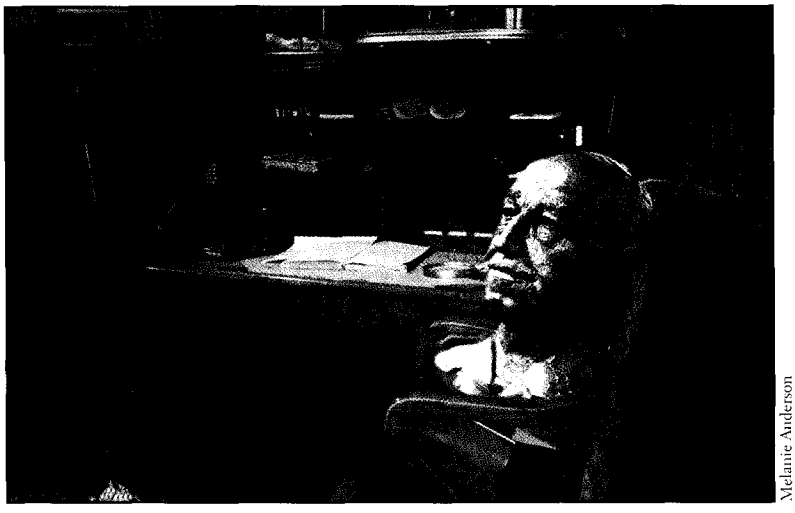
Portraits

Some Notes on the Poetry of Growing Old

by George Garrett



Melanie Anderson

Years and years ago—it would have to have been in 1958-59, a year that my wife and I and our two young children were living in Rome—I wrote a little satirical poem about famous old poets and what's to become of them. It was occasioned by a couple of things. First, there was the arrival at the library of the American Academy in Rome, where I was working, of an anthology of contemporary poetry, one in which, to my foolish and youthful dismay, I was not mentioned or included. That same day and place, I saw two bronze portraits done by one of the sculptors at the Academy, one of John Ciardi, the other of Archibald MacLeish. Both of these men were featured in the new anthology. I have no copy of my poem, only a loose memory of the last few lines (such as they were):

What finally becomes
of all these people,
people I mean
like John Ciardi
and Archibald MacLeish?
They get old.
They have their portraits
cast in bronze.

As best as I can recollect, it was never published anywhere. Which is just as well. It was disowned and discarded by myself, or perhaps some insistent editor or other, as being too "mean spirited" to see the light of day. Since then, for better and for worse, I have written a good many things that could justly be so classified. I never met MacLeish (1892-1982). Ciardi (1916-86) and I were to become good friends later on. And, anyway, in today's context of the new and unimproved illiteracy, a time described by a fellow poet (in part reacting to the dismal facts of illegal immigration and outsourcing) as "the age of broken English," all of our old literary joys and woes seem to be more than slightly irrelevant.

Even so, we are not quite done with this story. Lest I should misread and misinterpret the lessons out of my own past, something happened during this writing (springtime 2007) that took me by surprise. One day, I heard from the widow of the sculptor Allen Harris that she was passing through Charlottesville and wanted, if possible, to stop by and drop off something for me. (I am, appropriately, housebound these days with a rich variety of geriatric ailments.) I had no idea what she might be bringing. A gifted and accomplished sculptor, Allen had been my friend in Rome, and I have written about him elsewhere. Jean, his widow, arrived and handed me a heavy box. She explained that it contained a work by Allen, one which she had found while clearing out his old barn/studio. Unpacked, it turned out to be a bronze cast, a portrait of myself as I was in 1958. Other than a wincing laugh at the irony of it all—live long enough, and you'll discover that irony is the last infirmity of fading minds—I have no smart comment to make. Take it for what it's worth, no more and no less.

Meanwhile, friends and enemies in the shrinking literary world, poets and critics alike, seem to be dedicated to trying to create a "legacy," trying to determine whose names and works will be remembered and who shall be sent off with a one-way ticket to oblivion. We read the obituary pages, usually in vain, looking eagerly for the names of our rivals and always wondering how it is that the death of A earned respectful attention in the *New York Times* while B gets a brief nod and a misspelling of his name in the local newspaper.

A fictional character of mine, John Towne by name, seri-

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ously considered setting up shop as an obituary agent, aiming to aid his paying clients to receive the accolades and laurels of celebrity, if only posthumously. Some prominent literati whom I know of (not to mention the usual suspects, like politicians and pundits) have taken at face value the late Brother Dave Gardner's argument in favor of atomic warfare—that we would all go at the same time and "maintain our present status." Meantime, we all grow older, living beyond our time and means, and suffering many of the same aches and pains and symptoms. I will spare you their recapitulation here and now, instead recommending an article in the *New Yorker* (April 30, 2007): "The Way We Age Now," by Atul Gawande. It will acquaint you with the nasty and often scary details of degeneration.

It is not, as Yeats splendidly noted, a country of and for old men. Without doubt, Wilde had an agenda, one that we find all too familiar in our panic-stricken and rigidly secular age. We allow ourselves the myth (fiction) of nonbelieving even as all our plans and agendas and legacies are shattered to pieces by the simple and triumphant fact of death.

On average, our poets, like others, are living longer; but, for a variety of reasons, not many of them are writing much in their old age. There are, of course, some notable exceptions. I think fondly and gratefully of John Hall Wheelock, my first editor, who wrote some of his finest poems in his 90's; of Stanley Kunitz, who was still writing (now and then) at a hundred years; of Richard Wilbur, now in his late 80's, still favoring us with his shapely and admirable poems. To be sure, the superb exception of Sophocles, all those years ago, remains monumental. And looking forward, there may well be a good many more from the ranks of the next and coming generations. Most poetry about getting and being old, some of it excellent and accurately empathetic, has been written by poets who had not yet arrived at the bleak destination of old age. T.S. Eliot, and especially in "Little Gidding," seems again and again to speak for us, the elders, as well as to us: "Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age . . . " And you might want to take a look, with full allowance for its eccentricities, at *The Oxford Book of Aging* (1994), at least as a starting place. There, one finds examples of our classical originals—Aesop, Aristotle, Greek lyric poets, Hippocrates, Ovid, Plato, Seneca. And there I came upon a pertinent excerpt from Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* where bodily decrepitude makes no claims of wisdom and is the declared enemy of the "new Hedonism" of which Dorian Gray is to be "its visible symbol." What is the perception of the aging process as witnessed by Wilde, or, more accurately, his narrator? He writes:

> The pulse of joy that beats in us at twenty becomes sluggish. Our limbs fail, our senses rot. We degenerate into hideous puppets, haunted by the memory of the passions of which we were too much afraid, and the exquisite temptations that we had not the courage to yield to. Youth! Youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth.

It is not, as Yeats splendidly noted, a country of and for old men. Without doubt, Wilde had an agenda, one that we find all too familiar in our panic-stricken and rigidly secular age. We allow ourselves the myth (fiction) of nonbelieving even as all our plans and agendas and legacies are shattered to pieces by the simple and triumphant fact of death.

Which leads me to my final portrait, a group portrait, a photograph of members of the Fellowship of Southern Writers, taken a few years ago and framed and hanging on the wall near the desk where I am writing this piece. A cheerful, smiling photograph—the photographer must have told us all to "Say cheese!" Not all of the members were present, but, among those who briefly posed for the photographer, a number have died since then, and those who are alive are surely older. Here are the names of the dead: Cleanth Brooks, James Dickey, Shelby Foote, Andrew Lytle, Mary Lee Settle, Lewis P. Simpson, Walter Sullivan, Eudora Welty, and C. Vann Woodward. I see their smiling faces, and my own among them, every day. Sooner or later, it was bound to happen; I would have to make some sense out of that picture in the only way I can and know how—by making a poem, a small one, about it:

Group Portrait

Here I am again,
smiling broadly,
one face only
among a row
of famous faces,
the faces of
my elders and betters,
now lost and gone
to glory or surely
going that way soon.

What on earth
are we all
smiling about?

I put on my glasses
and turn on the lamp
to see myself
spring back to life
among the grinning dead.
Must we pose there forever
together in faceless dark?
Or will we, too, rise again
in the sudden gift of light
smiling?

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The Last *Adieu*

A Wake for the Living

by George McCartney

Melanie Anderson

It is not surprising that death has always been a target for comedians and satirists. After all, dying is the ultimate prat fall, an ungainly reminder to others that their time is coming. When Leo Tolstoy wanted to have a good laugh at the expense of the Russian middle class, he naturally chose a funeral for his setting. His story "The Death of Ivan Ilych," one of the starkest evocations of mortality in fiction, begins with mockery. Ivan Ilych, a judge of middling distinction and enormous vanity, has died. At the news, his colleagues in the judiciary immediately begin calculating how his demise will affect them. What realignments and promotions will follow? At the same time, these good gentlemen "could not help thinking . . . that they would now have to fulfill the very tiresome demands of propriety by attending the funeral service and paying a visit of condolence to the widow." At the wake in Ilych's home, these fellows bumble about not knowing what they are supposed to do in front of the coffin. Should they bless themselves or bow? Or is it both at once? Of one thing, however, they are all certain: As the narrator explains, "the death of a near acquaintance aroused, as usual, in all who heard of it the complacent feeling that, 'It is he who is dead and not I.'"

The television comic Jackie Gleason used to paint a cruder—some would say more congenial—version of Tolstoy's portrait of death's comedy with a story of an Irish wake held at home. It seems that, before he died, Frank told his wife, Eileen, that he wanted a wake that would please his family and friends. When the time comes, Eileen fully honors her husband's wishes. She furnishes his wake with ample food and drink. From the first night, it's a success. By the second night, it's a lively party; by the third, a roaring one. Happy to see this, Eileen decides to keep the wake going. But toward the end of the fourth night, she begins to worry. How much longer can she delay putting Frank in the ground? In a quandary, she approaches Frank's best friend, Pat, to ask his advice. Pat puts down his tumbler of Bushmills and says, "Ah, sure, Eileen, and Frank was as good a man as ever walked God's earth. And since you're asking my opinion of the matter, I'll tell you. I'm thinking you should have him stuffed and keep the party going."

I suspect Gleason got the idea for this joke from a tradition of lively funerals that had not quite died out among the Irish, both here and in the old country. The Irish, like the ancient Greeks, made a point of celebrating at funerals. Games and dancing used to be the rule in earlier days. And, of course, drink was necessary to keep the mourners' energy up. So spirited were these funeral parties that guests sometimes could not refrain from including the corpse in the fun, hoisting him from his coffin to join them for a reel or two.

Then there's the legend that comes down to us from 1899 in Armagh, Northern Ireland. There lived a certain George McCartney, the grandfather for whom I am named, who was known to have livened up a wake or two. At one, however, his high spirits turned regrettably mischievous. An aged farmer had died and was being waked in his barn. Arriving well before the scheduled hour of 7:00 P.M., George and his friends prepared a surprise for the evening. When the guests began to walk in a half-hour later, George rose from his seat and walked with reverent slowness toward the back of the barn as if he intended to greet them. As he did so, he pulled the slender rope he had tied around his waist under his jacket, a rope whose other end he and his friends had earlier tossed over one of the barn's rafters and tied underneath the corpse's armpits. In the darkened barn, the nearly invisible rope created an unnerving spectacle. The corpse began to sit up in his coffin, his head

George McCartney is Chronicles' *film editor.*

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thoughtfully turned to look out at his visitors. Within seconds, the would-be mourners were fleeing into the night. This being the kind of prank one does not want to boast about in one's own village, George booked passage to Canada the following year, where he began to tell and retell his anecdote of the wake to great effect through the seven decades preceding his own American funeral, a much more proper affair.

Fortunately, we in modern America have been spared such mockery and impropriety. Under the tutelage of capitalist entrepreneurs, funerals and wakes have been thoroughly professionalized and domesticated. They no longer take place in the family parlor where anything might happen. They have been relocated to the circumspect calm of the neighborhood funeral parlor, which often turns out to be a part of a chain of such establishments owned by a respectable franchising corporation with immense political clout. The Houston-based Service Corporation International is one such company. This firm, known officially as "the world's largest death care company," and unofficially as the McDonald's of death, has flourished by virtue of its kindliness to the Bush family, who helped them put down some nasty allegations of grave recycling in the late 1990's. Besides, recycling is a good thing, right?

Back inside the funeral home, an attentive funeral director keeps his clientele solemnly in line. No Bushmills, not even a Guinness, on the premises to threaten the occasion's dignity as the loved one is wafted whisperingly out of this world on rafts of malodorous lilies and daffodils. Like Tolstoy's middle-class Russians, we have surrendered to institutional respectability, going in fear of violating death's official rules. How has this happened?

In a word, we have been bullied. By the 1920's, morticians had come to realize they could squeeze much more profit from their customers if they called themselves funeral directors rather than undertakers, the more descriptively apt term for their trade. Their new title conferred an air of professional respectability. Once they became the officials of death, few of their grief-distracted customers were willing to question their practices. The directors could now lift from their clients' shoulders the unseemly burden of bargaining about caskets, floral arrangements, and burial plots. Who wanted to haggle while their loved one was still cooling on the mortuary slab? Who wanted it bruited about that he or she was a heartless bastard unwilling to fork over whatever it cost to see a wife or husband, mother or father sealed into a steel-plated, dampproof casket, perpetually defended against both the elements and the maggots? Thrift would never do on such an occasion. To decline even the most extravagant attention to the dearly departed would hardly advance one's social prestige. Better to shut up and pay.

This ludicrously one-sided business dynamic between the self-proclaimed death experts and their customers had gone largely unchallenged through the first half of the 20th century. Then, in 1963, an eccentric English émigré wrote a scathing attack on the industry. Jessica Mitford, aristocrat and communist, wrote *The American Way of Death* and immediately found herself a celebrity. Her book—equal parts exposé and satire—was an instant best-seller. She was interviewed on television and radio, and debated by funeral-industry spokesmen nationwide. CBS ran an hour-long documentary of American funeral practices based on her book. Newspapers and magazines could not stop writing about her. Mitford had lanced a festering boil. Americans had long sensed their friendly mortician was cheating them but lacked the certain knowledge to articulate their suspicions. Mitford armed them with the facts.

It all started when her labor-lawyer husband, Robert Treuhaft, discovered that, before taking the deceased into their parlors, funeral directors routinely asked to see the terms of their life-insurance policies. Once they found out the amount of coverage, they priced their services accordingly, more for larger settlements, less for smaller, but always painfully substantial. Furthermore, the costlier services were often no different from the cheaper. In her book, Mitford cites as one of her primary exhibits the case of the 1947 mine disaster that killed 111 men in Centralia, Illinois. It "proved a bonanza for the undertakers of that community," she dryly observes and then quotes the *United Mineworkers Journal*'s angry account. "The Centralia undertakers moved in like ghouls . . . [Their] unconscionable greed . . . literally followed the victims to their graves and mulcted the surviving dependents of sizable sums from the Welfare Fund death gratuity and state compensation they received."

Mitford points out that one wife was induced to pay $645 for a bronze metallic casket—that's $5,978 adjusted for inflation—while another was convinced her husband needed a gray metal model priced at $835 ($7,739), despite it being of cheaper construction. The cost difference, Mitford argues, was almost unquestionably dictated by the funeral director's knowledge of the insurance money each family had received.

Mitford's indignation at such practices is reinforced by her satiric wit. She sets up her account of the Centralia scandal by quoting from a fulsomely self-serving article from the *National Funeral Service Journal*, a publication not meant to be seen by anyone other than industry insiders.

> A funeral is not an occasion for a display of cheapness. It is, in fact, an opportunity for the display of a status symbol which, by bolstering family pride, does much to assuage grief. A funeral is also an occasion when feelings of guilt and remorse are satisfied to a large extent by the purchase of a fine funeral. It seems highly probable that the most satisfactory funeral service for the average family is one in which the cost has necessitated some degree of sacrifice. This permits the survivors to atone for any real or fancied neglect of the deceased prior to his death.

One wonders how much those metal caskets bolstered the pride of the miners' families. Were they status symbols enough?

Under a patina of professional respectability, the advice to undertakers in trade journals such as this one is remarkably cynical. The writer is quite clear that the bereaved's remorse is the mortician's opportunity. The "degree of sacrifice" a survivor is willing to make will escalate relative to how relieved he is at a loved one's departure. The greater the relief, the more expensively elaborate the public show of grief will need to be. It is this simple calculus of guilt that is so rewarding to the funeral industry.

And what does this "degree of sacrifice" purchase? First, a suitable casket, the most expensive and most profitable product among a mortician's wares. Funeral directors routinely try to sell solid-metal coffins sealed with rubber gaskets. Although their materials and construction are not really more

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costly than, say, a mahogany model, they command a higher price since they are supposed to keep the loved one as fresh as the day his formaldehyded carcass was buried. Putting aside the inanity of wishing to protect a corpse from rotting, the claim that any container can do so is wholly spurious. Mitford interviewed Dr. Jesse Carr, chief of pathology at San Francisco General Hospital, and discovered that, far from defending the body from rot, a sealed casket promotes the attack of anaerobic bacteria that cause the loved one to putrefy rather than decay. The results, Dr. Carr reported, are "pretty horrible." Carr's aesthetic point was that, upon exhumation, corpses buried in a plain wood coffin will look considerably better than those sealed into their own gooey putrefaction. For even superior cosmetic results, he advised burying the dead in nothing more than a shroud. On the metaphysical question of a corpse's own wishes, Dr. Carr was silent. Morticians, however, have been loud on the subject of caskets. They have lobbied—with only partial success, thankfully—to keep the law such that caskets can only be sold to morticians, who then mark them up from 400 to 700 percent. They also insist that corpses scheduled to be fed to the crematorium's flames must be housed in caskets—preferably in metal ones! The wonder of it is that, even after Mitford's book came out, Americans have continued to submit to such fantastic "customs."

Mitford also goes after embalming, which is nearly universal in America but generally not practiced in the rest of the world. It is another moneymaker, sold to Americans on the pretext of the necessity of sanitation and aesthetics. Again, not true. Unless a corpse is going to be on display for an inordinately long time, it will not noticeably decay nor will it pose any health issue at all. As Dr. Carr informed Mitford, "There are several advantages to being dead. You don't excrete, inhale, exhale, or perspire." In short, unless a person dies of a communicable disease, his corpse is not a hazard. Embalming is not for the benefit of the deceased or the survivors. "The purpose of embalming," Mitford explains, "is to make the corpse presentable for viewing in a suitably costly container."

Mitford is similarly severe with cemetery owners, who, she alleges convincingly, are generally practicing a nonprofit racket. They induce public officials to support their public-spirited campaigns to purchase land priced well below its market value. Then they divide this land into as many plots as possible. In some instances, they forego footpaths to maximize their profits, forcing visitors to trample over countless gravesites to get to their loved one's underground residence. Once the land is divvied up, the cemetery's sales people market the hell out of the newly minted eternal resting places, often selling them on a "pre-need" basis to geezers in the surrounding communities. When all is said and done, half the money stays with the cemetery's nonprofit finances, and the other half goes into a dummy corporation known only to the cemetery's public-spirited investors.

Although Mitford never tips her communist hand, there can be little doubt that she found the funeral industry an especially piquant example of predatory capitalism—a business that has an enviably uninformed clientele. Its customers approach their transactions without much stomach for making price comparisons. Except for those tough-minded enough to have made judicious arrangements well beforehand, funeral purchasers are forced to enter their contracts trusting to the honesty of the purveyor. All the conditions of the typical funeral mock the touted advantages of the free market. I have no doubt that Mitford meant her exposé to cast doubt on other capitalist enterprises as well. But even socialists might pause at Mitford's suggested alternatives to the inherently unfair marketplace of death service. She recommends that either the government take care of our funeral needs or we participate in self-financed funeral societies, groups of like-minded individuals sick unto death of the funeral industry's extortionate practices. Although the governmental alternative might diminish some of the unspeakable vulgarity of many American funerals, I doubt whether, in the long run, it would reduce their final cost. The individual funeral might seem cheaper in such a system, but our ingenious public servants would doubtless use our deaths as they do our lives to siphon unimaginable billions into their coffers. Think of where your Social Security funds are going. They are not in a lockbox under the Capitol, as some of our legislators liked to claim a few years ago. The funeral society sounds like a nice idea for free-floating Unitarians and nonbelievers, but others will probably think of such organizations as redundant to the offices performed by their churches. Of course, it would be nice if our religious leaders stepped up and intervened more than they do. Mitford comments on this, pointing out, in particular defense of the clergy, the obstacles they encounter. Funeral directors do all they can to keep them away from their dealings with clients. Wherever possible, the shrewd morticians try to eliminate church altogether, calling their own establishments "chapels" and offering their own secular services for the dead. Mitford applauds the hardier among the clergy who resist this tendency, especially those who speak out against the excesses of the funeral trade, but she regrets that we do not hear more voices of sanity. This seems a fair assessment of our current situation—and surprising also, coming from a communist.

Indeed, Mitford's book helped to change some of the practices of America's funeral industry. It took ten years from its publication date, but the Federal Trade Commission finally instituted the Funeral Rule, which requires morticians to issue an itemized cost list of their services so that customers can pick and choose what they want and can afford. It also stipulates that the customer has the right to buy a casket from an independent supplier. The funeral director can no longer suggest that embalming is mandated by law. As is the nature of things in our land, however, the industry immediately began lobbying to weaken these regulations, often with success. Elsewhere, it simply ignored them. This is why Mitford, right up to her death in 1996, was working on an updated version of her book, which was reissued in 1998 as *The American Way of Death Revisited*. Her work remains as relevant today as it was in 1963.

Surely, it is quixotic of me to make the following suggestion, but, reading Mitford, I could not help wondering if we would not be better off if we returned to waking our dead at home. There are far too many officials directing our lives as it is. Must we allow funeral directors to usher us officially from the stage once we have played our final scene? And overcharge us unconscionably, while they're at it? Of course, few are prepared to handle a corpse at home, but perhaps it would be possible to hire less intrusive professionals to come and assist with such preparations as necessary. Then, we could reclaim our right to see our dead into the next world as we and they would prefer. We would decently toast our loved ones with Bushmills or Guinness at our leisure. And, in the softly dimming light, they might, on occasion, even sit up to wink a last *adieu*. c

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A Dirge for the Living

by Hugh Barbour, O.Praem.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"
—1 Corinthians 15:55

Since I am writing about death, I think I may begin with my own life. Autobiography is, after all, a kind of first-person eulogy for the living. Here is what I think is my earliest memory: "Now I lay me down to sleep. / I pray the Lord my soul to keep. / If I should die before I wake, / I pray the Lord my soul to take."

Although Maria the sweet old Slovak sitter said *vake* and *ze*, my supple three-year-old senses could repeat after her without adopting her fractured pronunciation, as she heard my prayers before bed, one bright summer evening in the Los Angeles of the early 60's. She let me say them looking out the window of the nursery at the church across the yard, as my father was preceding a casket out the main door. There were Santana winds, and so he was billowing in black and white and purple.

In the following years, I would hear my father recite the antiphon from the medieval liturgy found in the burial office of the Prayer Book (an antiphon I later rediscovered in its Latin original in my monastery's singing of Compline during Lent): "In the midst of life we are in death; of whom may we seek for succour, but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins are justly displeased? Yet, O Lord most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death."

Mere children, and generations of them, have been exposed in their tenderest years, not only to the thought of death and Hell, but to the distinct possibility that they might die and that they might be everlastingly lost. Little first communicants of Roman obedience have long been taught to pray that they are sorry for their sins because they "dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell." It is hardly a secret that these notions are now widely considered as unsuitable for children, and perhaps for anyone else. One has only to examine some new forms of the Act of Contrition, a kind of contrition "lite," free of the thought of punishment temporal or eternal; or the expurgated version in use of "Now I lay me down to sleep," with its cheerful certainty of the "morning light," which rhymes with "night."

Just this past year, the Vatican's International Theological Commission published a document studying the question of the fate of children below the age of reason who die without Baptism. It was widely touted as a repudiation of the various traditional patristic and scholastic (and scriptural) doctrines of East and West, which have universally (not even the Pelagians or the gently Origenistic St. Gregory of Nyssa did otherwise) denied supernatural bliss to them. The most well-developed elaboration of this tradition is that of the *limbus puerorum*, the limbo of the children. In fact, the document is not so much a repudiation of these theses—which it is well-nigh impossible to do, given the weight of Christian tradition, and the absence (or so it would seem) of any claim to be able to revise an ongoing revelation, such as that available to the magisterium of the Latter Day Saints. What this much publicized nonmagisterial document actually expressed is rather that contemporary Western European Christians are scandalized by the thought that the large number of children who die without Baptism are excluded from Heaven, and that some alternative should be offered their sensibilities that somehow does not transgress the elastic bounds of orthodoxy. Presumably, those who are not scandalized by this possibility are left free to maintain the classical positions, as long as they admit that it is permissible to hope that there may be a way, albeit simply miraculous, for them to reach Heaven, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches.

Although the reader may be able to divine the tendencies of this writer on the question, the reason for bringing it up here is not to discuss a current tension between orthodoxy and orthopraxis. St. Ignatius of Loyola, after all, teaches that, if the discussion of a doctrine is an occasion for disedification or too difficult for public presentation, it should not be preached upon. Rather, the issue to be expounded here is a more fundamental one: Why are contemporary "believers" scandalized by unbaptized children in Hell or limbo, when, not so long ago, baptized Episcopalian children were warned in their prayers against eternal loss even before they reached the age of discretion?

An answer is going to be offered here which may seem beyond strange coming from a cleric who is both an Augustinian and a Thomist. A prefatory clarification is thus in order. It is certain that the natural immortality of the spiritual human soul can be established with the clearest proofs from the operations of the human intellect. This philosophical truth can be an important preamble to the truths of faith professed by Christians.

In fact, this doctrine is at the root of the current eschatological scandal. Yet the real scandal and its efficacious resolution are found in confronting and resolving the question not of what goes on after death, but of death itself. In their notions of the world to come, modern Western Christians are direct heirs, not of the robust *kerygma* of the Bible and the Fathers, but of denatured post-Christian versions of Christian anthropological teaching. Just as everyone believes in the Universal Rights of Man—liberty, equality, and fraternity, *und so weiter*—so they all believe in personal survival after bodily death, in the "afterlife," in which we are "with God" and probably also aware of those whom we have left behind.

The real issue, the proverbial 800-pound gorilla so beloved of therapists, is so large and obvious that no one confronts it: Millions of little children die, whether their death is spontaneous or procured. The God Who made them lets them die, and often terribly, and often at the hands of their own mothers. Why, then, are we not scandalized by this? Because we place our outraged sense of order at several removes from the most pertinent fact of mortality, assuming a continued existence after a morally absurd death, and that it ought to be not only

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pleasant but literally infinitely better than this life.

The Preacher tells us in Ecclesiastes 3,

> I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.
>
> For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

If the soul is a human soul, its natural capacities after death are limited, since men depend on their bodies for knowledge. Aristotle and the Old Testament agree in principle: Left to itself, the human soul after death has a truncated existence with a knowledge indistinct and ineffective, a limbo not even of natural happiness, but of shadowy imprecision—a kind of sleep, indifferent to whether the soul was good or evil while in the body. The Platonic elaborations are only edifying myth, and Plato admits as much. Only God can overcome the natural consequences of the separation of the soul from the corporeal and necessary instruments, the organs of its operation, and, if He does so by providing the separated soul with distinct experience, knowledge, and memory, by supplying in act for the lack of a body, then this is, in principle, no different from the full complement of a merciful—or, in the case, of the wicked, just—intervention: namely, the Resurrection of the Dead.

Post-Christian society, like late antique society—the former, because it is justly haunted by the Apocalypse and scholasticism; the latter, because it accepted the popularized doctrine of Plato's dialogues—takes for granted a rather vivid mythology of life after death that is not warranted by the natural facts of the case. And it is to the natural facts of the case that a genuine biblical eschatology is meant to respond. If we understand human nature as necessarily and essentially a composite of body and soul, death is the main obstacle to a properly human happiness. Thus, Heaven and Hell become assertions of the divine justice which the natural state of the separated soul would never be able to attain. Heaven and Hell are not simply the moral continuations of the soul's life beyond this life; they are intrinsically bound up with the resolution of the problem of death. To be sure, the Beatific Vision may be established, even with dialectical and philosophical arguments, to be the end of man, an end he has in common with other spiritual creatures who have no body and cannot die, but this is a point established independently of whether a man must die. Death or no, it is all the same if one parts from the perspective of the intellectual nature of man; on this point, he might as well be an angel, as Saint Thomas acutely determines. The most specifically biblical element is the resolution by God of the *aporia* of death in the Resurrection and its preliminaries, not the natural immortality of the soul, or its disembodied bliss or punishment, which, in any case, only points to the full Resurrection, since the divine initiative that punishes or rewards must do so by compensating for the lack of a body.

It is not without reason that the principal Christian doctrine is called the Incarnation, the embodiment of the Word, or that the earliest Christologies are characterized by the *Logos-Sarx*, the Word-Flesh union. The religion of Jesus is the religion of God in the flesh overcoming death, and not the religion of the immortal soul. Personal survival after death is a truth that could well endure without a revelation, and without this same revelation, the knowledge of it is not really a consolation if one considers seriously the implications of the subsistence of the form of a body without a body.

Thus, Saint Irenaeus and Arnobius of Sicca clearly understand immortality not as a natural gift, but as the gift of grace. In the case of the former, this is not because he would not grant a natural immortality its rational place, but because to be really immortal for man means not just to exist, but to live in the body. In his *Adversus Nationes*, Arnobius of Sicca goes even further, attacking the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul as a pagan fable, destructive of morality and piety, the refuge of the lawless. For Arnobius, only God in Christ resolves the problem of death, because only He can restore man to life after death and so reward and punish with complete justice:

> The conviction of the soul's immortality not only is a stimulus for vices, but it also removes the rationale of philosophy itself and shows the futility of taking it up because of the difficulty that it leads to nothing. For if it is true that souls know no end and march along with every century in the unbroken line of the ages, what danger is there when the virtues, by which life becomes somewhat limited and unattractive, are despised and neglected and one surrenders himself to pleasures and permits the untempered heat of wild desire to rampage through lust of every kind? The danger of falling away under indulgence and of being ruined by the enervation of vices? But how can that be ruined which is immortal, which exists forever and is not subject to any suffering? . . . How can that be befouled which has no corporeal substance?

No one would give Arnobius a laurel for profound philosophical insight, but he stands as an important witness, even if a wrong-headed one, to the fact that the immediate and essential point of the orthodox biblical teaching for an ancient Catholic is the sure hope of resurrection and judgment, whether merciful or just, not personal survival after death. This perspective is more wholesome because it meets the question of human destiny at a point that no theological acrobatics can eliminate: the disaster for human nature of physical death. We will never read an article announcing "Theologians Abolish Death," even though we have read articles suggesting that they have abolished Hell or at least its vicinity. You see, it is Christ who has abolished death by His Resurrection and established mercy and justice firmly in the world to come, and if, in His justice, He decreed the penalty of death, then we will not be scandalized by other penalties, or take for granted His merciful rewards.

Even so, in the meantime, I will sing the threnody with the Scottish poet, with its refrain from the funeral dirge of Matins, and think of my childish, human fears that I learned when I learned to pray as a Christian, hopeful of overcoming death, "That strong unmerciful tyrand / Takis, on the motheris breast sowkand / the babe full of benignite:— / *Timor Mortis conturbat me*" (William Dunbar, "Lament for the Makers").

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Tethering the Hegemon

The Transatlantic Divide on the Use of Force

by Ted Galen Carpenter

When examining American or European views on the use of force and the role of international institutions, it is necessary to speak only of general tendencies. There are, of course, many exceptions to the overall trend on both sides of the Atlantic. Nevertheless, generally speaking, America's long-time European allies have become increasingly alarmed at aspects of the Bush administration's foreign policy. Criticism of U.S. actions is most pronounced in France and Germany, the core of what U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld once derisively referred to as "old Europe," but it is spreading to Washington's previously enthusiastic new allies in Central and Eastern Europe as well.

The Bush administration's conduct has heightened the scope of disagreement, but the administration is not the sole cause of transatlantic estrangement. American and European interests and perspectives are diverging on an array of issues and have been doing so for some time. With the demise of the Soviet Union, there is no longer a focal point of unity in the Western alliance, and, although policymakers in both Washington and some European capitals have tried to make the "War on Terror" into a new source of cohesion, that effort has been, at best, a partial success. It has taken more than a decade and a half, but transatlantic relations are beginning to return to their normal pattern—the pattern that existed during the century or so before World War II and the Cold War. Such a development means that, while U.S. and European interests may still overlap on some issues, we are likely to find more and more instances in the future where they do not coincide.

Both the United States and the leading European powers need to adopt more realistic and mature attitudes about these developments. Too often, Europeans want an activist United States that will be responsible for global security and will take a leading role in resolving Europe's specific security problems, such as the Balkan crises of the 1990's. At the same time, many of those same Europeans want the United States to follow passively the wishes of her allies on key policy issues. They seek a United States that is powerful enough to be a hegemon, but humble enough not to exercise that awesome power unilaterally—in essence, a tethered hegemon, which is inherently contradictory and unrealistic.

Furthermore, if the European countries want Washington to take them seriously, they must forge a cohesive foreign and security policy and back it up with serious military resources. Thus far, the European countries have not been willing to make the hard decisions and the economic sacrifices. In addition to developing a credible security role, the European allies must be willing to challenge U.S. policy and not back down. Finally, they must ask the United States to do less in the security arena and show their own willingness to do more on their own.

Although the Europeans indulge in some unrealistic expectations about U.S. conduct, American policymakers and opinion leaders harbor their own illusions about our allies. They expect the prosperous and proud European countries to act as obedient U.S. clients whenever Washington pursues an initiative. They apparently expect such deference even when the Europeans disagree with the substance of U.S. policy and when European interests may not be served by that policy. Such expectations may have been plausible during NATO's infancy, when a war-ravaged Western Europe faced a powerful and dangerous threat to its security and desperately needed the United States as a protector, but they are woefully misguided today.

Americans and European can continue the unproductive and demeaning spectacle of transatlantic name-calling until increasing bitterness dashes all hopes of effective cooperation even on those issues where there are common interests. It would be far better for both sides to acknowledge that the United States and Europe are two regions with overlapping but frequently different interests and perspectives and that the divergence is likely to grow rather than diminish. In the future, America and her traditional allies simply may have to agree to disagree on some important issues. Above all, they must learn to disagree without becoming disagreeable.

Acrimonious disputes have arisen between the United States and the leading European Union countries about such issues as the Kyoto Protocol on the environment, the International Criminal Court, and ballistic-missile defense. The gap between U.S. and European policy preferences became more acute, however, following the issuance of the Bush administration's National Security Strategy (NSS) in September 2002 and the application of that strategy in Iraq.

European critics have been most agitated by the section in the NSS on "preemptive action" (actually, preventive war), in which the United States clearly moved beyond her Cold War-era policy of containing potential aggressors to one of proactive measures. The NSS states that goal succinctly: "We must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends." On another occasion, the Bush administration emphasized that the United States would not "permit the world's most dangerous regimes" to pose a threat "with the world's most destructive weapons."

Although the section on "preemptive action" has received the most attention, both in the United States and abroad, it

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is not the only important component of the NSS. The entire document provides a revealing view of U.S. global objectives. Although administration officials would never use the term publicly, the Bush National Security Strategy is profoundly *imperial*. It is not merely the section on preemptive war that merits such a description; taken as a whole, the document provides a blueprint for an extraordinarily activist and assertive U.S. foreign policy.

The overriding goal of the Bush administration's strategy is to shape aggressively the international system in ways that will sustain and perpetuate America's dominant position and forestall the rise of any serious security challengers or peer competitors. Indeed, one passage in the NSS stresses that one priority of the United States is to "dissuade future military competition." That approach was foreshadowed a decade earlier in the initial draft of the Pentagon Planning Guidance document that was leaked to the press. The so-called Wolfowitz draft was extraordinarily candid in expressing Washington's goal of discouraging regional powers–even friendly regional powers–from wanting to play more active political-military roles in international affairs. Although the applicable language was considerably toned down in the final version, there is little doubt that the United States desired global hegemony, and Washington's conduct in the intervening years has been consistent with that objective. The Bush administration is only a little more brazen than its predecessors in embracing a hegemonic strategy.

During the second half of the 20th century, the United States took preemptive actions on a number of occasions. As Max Boot points out, "we have often sought out war, not waited for it to come to us. Many such interventions have been undertaken as part of America's long-standing commitment to act as global policeman."

That has been especially true in the Western Hemisphere–and it is not merely the product of a bygone era of U.S. imperialism in the early 20th century. In the mid-1960's, the United States invaded and occupied the Dominican Republic to forestall the emergence of a left-wing government that U.S. leaders believed would be overly friendly to Fidel Castro. U.S. military forces stormed ashore in Grenada in 1983 for a similar reason. Six years later, the administration of George H.W. Bush authorized military operations in Panama to oust and capture Manuel Noriega.

Such actions have not been limited to the Western Hemisphere. The United States and her NATO allies intervened in the Bosnian civil war in 1995, arguing that the disorder resulting from the secessionist campaign of the Bosnian Serbs threatened the peace and stability of Europe. In 1999, Washington led a bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, justifying that intervention on the grounds that Belgrade's brutal treatment of the ethnic Albanian population in Kosovo also jeopardized the peace and stability of Europe. In both cases, it should be emphasized, U.S. forces attacked an adversary that had not attacked the United States, a U.S. ally, or even a non-allied neighboring state. Indeed, the targeted party had not even threatened such an attack.

Bitter disagreements between the United States and many of our European allies over the Bush administration's bold and stated commitment to preemption have already emerged with great clarity with respect to Iraq. A similar, and perhaps even more stark, disagreement will follow if Washington contemplates using force against Iran. The EU-3 (and probably most European governments) are willing to endorse fairly strong economic sanctions to get Tehran to abandon its apparent quest for nuclear weapons. They are not prepared to embrace military measures, however. Even the British government, America's most reliable ally, has clearly stated that it is not on board for a war against Iran.

Washington increasingly wants to transform its alliances into geographically broader instruments of U.S. foreign policy. Thus, U.S. policymakers regard the mission in Afghanistan as a crucial test of NATO's relevance in the 21st century, even though it is far removed from NATO's traditional European theater. That is why the Bush administration keeps pressing our European allies for more troops for that mission and for the removal of constraints on their use. Such pressure will likely increase in the coming months.

By making approval of the U.N. Security Council a prerequisite for taking military action, the European powers hope to prevent the United States from running amok.

In addition, the United States seeks to transform her bilateral alliances with Japan and South Korea to cover, as one official put it, "other security contingencies in East Asia." That is code for a loose containment policy against China. And Washington is getting push back from the South Koreans, just as it is getting push back from many of the European allies on attempts to broaden NATO's coverage. For most Europeans, NATO is still primarily an institution to deal with European security issues–and as a long-term insurance policy if authoritarian trends in Russia turn more ominous. Europeans are wary of turning NATO into an "out of area" alliance to implement U.S. policy objectives in the Middle East or Central and Southwest Asia. That suggests some fundamental medium- and long-term disagreements between the United States and her European allies.

Washington's perspective is especially illustrated by its attitude toward the role of the U.N. Security Council. Whatever their official rhetoric about the need to respect the prerogatives of the Security Council, U.S. leaders have always treated it as a marginal and dispensable player. If the other members of the council are willing to support the foreign-policy objectives of the United States, well and good. If not, the council is an institution to be bypassed, ignored, or defied.

True, Washington has preferred to work through the United Nations instead of operating unilaterally. However, that is true only when the United States would indisputably remain in charge of policy. In essence, U.S. leaders want a multilateral patina for American policy initiatives.

That rather cynical approach did not begin with George W. Bush. Indeed, it shows up clearly in both the Korean War and the Gulf War. In the former, Washington sought a Security Council resolution calling on member states to render aid to the Republic of Korea to repel the North Korean inva-

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sion. Once the resolution passed, though, the United States ran the subsequent "police action" as one of her own military operations. Crucial decisions, such as whether to cross the 38th Parallel and seek to liberate North Korea rather than just repulse the invasion, were made in the Pentagon and the White House, not the United Nations. Likewise, U.S. officials conducted the negotiations and made the necessary concessions when the armistice was concluded in 1953. Ultimately, the U.N. Security Council played no meaningful role in the conduct of the mission.

The military intervention to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1990-91 was barely more of a genuine U.N. operation. It was clear that the United States was willing to work through the United Nations only as long as the other members of the Security Council endorsed Washington's policy agenda. On more than one occasion, President George H.W. Bush indicated that the United States was prepared to act unilaterally or at the head of an *ad hoc* coalition if the United Nations was not able or willing to act to reverse Baghdad's aggression.

Once the war began, the military decisionmaking authority and the command structure remained overwhelmingly American, just as they had in Korea. Washington was more subtle in creating a multilateral façade this time, but it was still a façade.

When Washington has been unable to secure Security Council approval, it has simply regarded the Council as irrelevant. Most notably, it conducted a massive military undertaking in Vietnam, lasting more than a decade, without ever seeking Security Council authorization. And Vietnam was hardly the only U.S. military intervention that snubbed the council. Other ventures during the Cold War included operations in Lebanon (1958), the Dominican Republic (1965), and Grenada (1983). And, of course, the United States bypassed the council to launch military operations against Serbia in 1999 over the Kosovo issue, and to oust the regime of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

In the case of Kosovo, both Russia and China opposed military action against Serbia for an assortment of policy reasons. U.S. leaders realized that, if the United States worked through the Security Council, Washington's policy preferences would not prevail, and they were simply unwilling to accept that result. With regard to Iraq, the opposition to the U.S. position was even more widespread. Not only were Russia and China likely to veto a resolution explicitly authorizing the use of force, but France probably would have done so as well.

The dominant European attitude toward international institutions, especially the United Nations, is that they are essential mechanisms not only for resolving disputes peacefully but for constraining American unilateralism. By making approval of the U.N. Security Council a prerequisite for taking military action, the European powers hope to prevent the United States from running amok. In other words, the goal is to prevent the Iraq intervention from becoming the norm of U.S.-security behavior in the 21st century. That approach is yet another manifestation of the European desire to make the United States a tethered hegemon.

America has her own agenda, however, and she will never consent to play the role that the Europeans desire. Neither the United Nations nor NATO will effectively constrain U.S. power. Only a policy of self-restraint will do that. In light of the bruising experience in Iraq, that self-restraint might reemerge in the coming years, but it is still too soon to be certain. c

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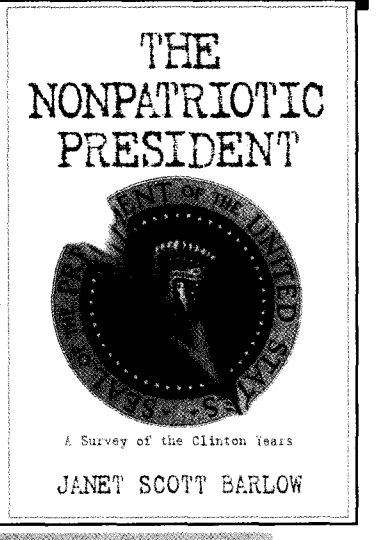
What could we expect from a second President Clinton?

The Nonpatriotic President

A Survey of the Clinton Years

by Janet Scott Barlow



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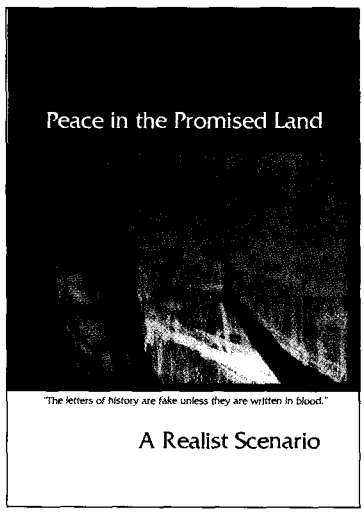

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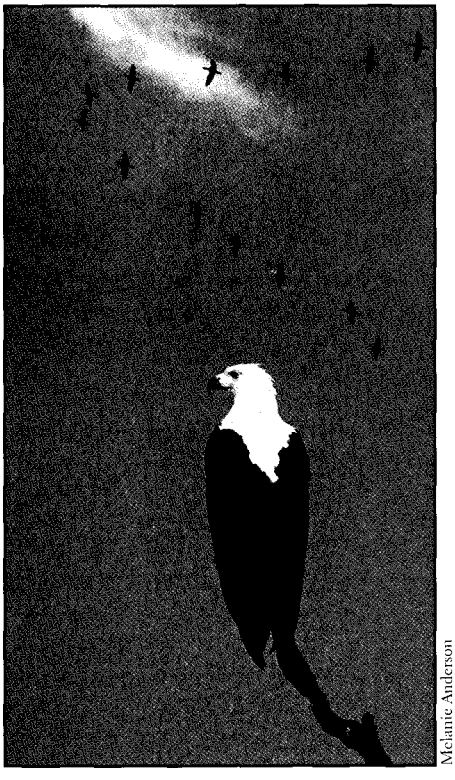
An American Patrician

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"Unto ourselves, our own life is necessary; unto others, our character."
—Saint Augustine



Melanie Anderson

George Kennan: A Study of Character
by John Lukacs
New Haven: Yale University Press;
207 pp., $26.00

◆

For John Lukacs, George F. Kennan was

> A Man for All Seasons, a triumph of character, a man of principles more than of ideas. He had his prejudices, and some of them were odd ones; but he could recognize them looking into his own mental mirror; and, more, there was such goodness, such compassion, such charity in his heart that were sufficient for his mind to correct them.

Yet this posthumous tribute, paid by one friend of many years to the memory of another, is in no sense a eulogy: It is a meditation on the exemplary connection between the content of a man's character and the content of his ideas and opinions. We are all too inclined to disconnect the two, with such assurances as, "Everyone is welcome to his opinion," or, "Yes, So-and-So *does* think that, but his heart is in the right place." Lukacs's "Study of Character" implicitly confirms the link, without ever suggesting that Kennan's opponents and critics were men of bad character. The forbearance displayed in this respect can stem only from the Christian charity and humility (as well as the ideas) shared by subject and author alike.

John Lukacs perceives in certain of Kennan's obituaries "a sense of respectful distance . . . a sense that George Kennan was part of a now unretrievable past." There is truth in this perception, Lukacs admits. Between 1904, when Kennan was born, and his death on March 17, 2005, the population of the United States increased from approximately 80 million people to 280 million—"so many more, and a different people, and a different country." The scion of a solid, but neither wealthy nor professionally distinguished, family, George Kennan, descended as he was from old American Protestant stock (James Kennan arrived in New England in 1720 from Dumfries, Scotland), belonged nevertheless to what, in American terms, amounts even now to the patrician class. An inviolably private and reserved man, he was shaped instinctively by his ancestry, which he venerated. (His book *An American Family: The Kennans, the First Three Generations* was completed when the author was 96 years old.) By the time of his passing, Americans of his type had become a rare and endangered breed. As a man of letters too, Kennan in his old age was increasingly an anomaly among what Lukacs describes as a "herd of otherwise educated people less and less capable of knowledge and reflection" (and, he might have added, literate composition). And he was not a celebrity, nor did he desire to be one. A lovely phrase, written by Raymond Chandler to describe Somerset Maugham, applies: He was, indeed, "a lonely old eagle," who, to a certain extent, was in youth as much a displaced man as in old age. As early as 1936, when he was only 32 years old, Kennan was saddened by what he saw on a bicycle trip through his native Wisconsin. America, he understood, was part of his world no longer. Duty required that he remain loyal to his country. "But it would be a loyalty," he later wrote, "*despite*, not a loyalty *because*, a loyalty of principle, not of identification."

George F. Kennan was a thoroughly grounded man, one who knew who he was and where he came from, possessed of what Lukacs calls "an independent sense of self-esteem." Moreover, patrician that he was, there was in his make-up not an iota of that aggressive banality we call vulgarity—and that amounts to

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Chilton Williamson, Jr., is Chronicles' *senior editor for books.*

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more than a want of taste and dignity, being, at bottom, a moral flaw. Both of these considerations go far to explain Kennan's immunity to popular opinion; to the clichéd, timorous yet excitable, conformative, and profoundly unimaginative thinking of government officialdom; and to the mass hysteria that characterized America during the Cold War. ("My mental processes," he once mused, "will never be understood by anyone else.")

"Throughout his life," Lukacs writes, "he regarded the primacy of domestic politics over the true interests of the state as wrong and immoral." A "visceral and intellectual critic" of communism, he deplored as well much or most of all that liberal democracy stands for and entails. In 1938, Kennan made a start on a book in which he planned to advocate restrictions on immigration to the United States and a restriction of the suffrage, then put it aside. For him, America's history, her very being, was inseparable from Europe present, but also Europe past, an insight reflecting what Lukacs describes as

> the spirit of Kennan's love and respect for an older Europe, so characteristic of his thinking: musings about history that are more than nostalgic illusions of a past but fundamental perceptions of the then present—a compound of his idealism and his realism.

It was Kennan's groundedness that produced and allowed for both his independence of mind and the moral courage required to defend and sustain that independence. "No people," he wrote in 1940, "is great enough to establish world hegemony." Clearly, he was morally, intellectually, and personally unsuited to serve for long in any federal administration at least since 1896; thus, his tenure "on the bridge of the ship of state," in Lukacs's metaphor, was not a lengthy one. As a Foreign Service officer in Berlin at the beginning of World War II, Kennan quietly regretted the war and President Roosevelt's foreign diplomacy, wishing for the defeat of the Third Reich but not the obliteration of the German people, with whom he had great affinity. Similarly, he believed that Roosevelt's expectations regarding the Russians were really illusions. (This, despite a sympathetic fascination with Russia and all things Russian that exceeded even his feeling for Germany.) By 1944, he had reached the conclusion that to place any trust whatsoever in the Soviet Union would be deleterious to the interests of the United States. It was at this historical moment, and on precisely this point, that George Kennan's thinking converged with that of the political establishment in Washington.

Even so, that convergence was far from complete, limited as it was to agreement on an effective strategy in respect of the Soviet Union that in no way extended to a general comprehension of Stalinist Russia. In Moscow in August 1944, Kennan recognized that here was the moment for the Allies to demand of Stalin that he define his objectives in Eastern Europe. That opportunity having been missed, the Western powers would need to make the best of the situation as it stood. This, in Kennan's opinion, did not include making fateful concessions to Moscow in order to bring the Soviet Union into the United Nations (an institution upon which Kennan, who believed that national interests must trump those of international organizations, cast a stonefish eye), which was what happened. Yet the threat Kennan perceived in the Soviet Union was of the traditional nationalist-imperialist variety, not the ideological-revolutionary sort. That same year he said as much in a 35-page memoranda, "Russia: Seven Years Later," posted to his ambassador, who forwarded it to Washington. Here, Kennan argued that, during the Moscow purges of the 1930's, "the ship of state had been cut loose from the bonds of Communist dogma." Stalin, he thought, should be regarded as a peasant czar rather than an international revolutionary. As Lukacs notes, more than 60 years after George Kennan wrote this analysis, its accuracy has yet to be recognized by most historians. Small wonder, then, that the White House and the State Department have yet to grasp this solid truth, let alone that most (with the exception of Averell Harriman) overlooked the insight when Kennan first offered it. Today, his perceptiveness is attested to by Putin's increasingly adversarial stance toward the United States, which is by no means attributable solely to George W. Bush's tactless and aggressive diplomacy but continues the Russian nationalist tradition of suspicion toward the West, now that ideological grounds for hostility have been removed.

George Kennan was "on the bridge of the ship of state" from 1946 to 1950, "one of its highest officers, close to the table charting its course, subordinate only to a few men." During these years, Lukacs insists, he demonstrated a marked consistency of conviction, despite seeming contradictions that indeed were noted by his contemporaries. Hence, it is unsurprising that his views and policy recommendations were far from a perfect fit with those of his colleagues. After lecturing on the Soviet Union at the National War College, Kennan was sent on a speaking tour around the country to address audiences chosen for him by the State Department. Addressing academic gatherings, he found (Lukacs writes) "a deadening incapacity to think at all realistically about the world as it was, together with a cramped and dishonest unwillingness to think at all realistically about the Soviet Union." Conversely, he found reason to state, in a speech delivered at the University of Virginia, "I deplore the hysterical sort of anticommunism which, it seems to me, is gaining currency in our country."

Early in 1947, Dean Acheson, the undersecretary of state, called George Kennan to his office to request his presence at a meeting of a special committee convened to discuss a request by the British government that the United States assume the burden of supporting the Greek government against the indigenous communists. Kennan made the vote unanimous by voting in the affirmative. He was dismayed, however, when he read the draft of what was to become the Truman Doctrine speech, and said so. His objection was to the stated American commitment to support any people threatened by "armed minorities or outside pressures." Not only was a universal commitment unwelcome, he thought, but it greatly overstated the extent of America's national interests. Here was the first of Kennan's disagreements with the undersecretary. Lukacs writes that both Acheson and Kennan

> could see, in 1947, how American popular sentiment and public opinion were changing; for instance, how former extreme isolationists became radical interventionists, for whom no American move against the Soviet Union could be drastic enough.

Acheson was willing to accommodate that sentiment. Kennan, with his lifelong resentment of the American tendency to subordinate foreign policy to untroubled public opinion, was not. Nevertheless, charged with putting together a Policy Planning Staff, he oversaw the writing of

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the Marshall Plan, for which he accepted hardly any credit. Then, five days later, Kennan delivered an address to the War College (May 6, 1947) in which he rejected the Truman Doctrine as a global commitment, dismissed the possibility of coming to agreements with the Soviet Union over the future of Germany, and urged the restoration of Western Europe.

The following month, "The Source of Soviet Conduct," by "X," was printed in *Foreign Affairs*. The article argued for Western resistance to the Soviet Union—and the communist ideology—by a process of "containment" relying primarily on political means. The author's identity was promptly revealed by Arthur Krock, but scarcely ahead of the ensuing wave of enthusiasm. Yet the author himself was displeased by the article's reception. He regretted his failure to mention Eastern Europe, an omission that could be taken to imply that Kennan believed the division of the Continent to be an acceptable situation. And he chastised himself for not having drawn clearer distinctions between acceptable political and military means for opposing the Soviets.

Later, after Acheson became secretary of state, Kennan was to fault what he called the "militarization" of his containment policy. Meanwhile, he found himself in disagreement with General MacArthur and the Republican Party regarding the seriousness of the threat posed by Red China. The Republican Party line was that the success of the communist insurgents against the Nationalists would be disastrous for the United States. Kennan, believing that the Soviet Union had much to lose if the Chinese Communists won, demurred. Whether a victorious China would be a catastrophe for the Democratic Party was probably a matter of little, if any, concern to him; if so, his principled nonpartisanship would be ill-repaid by John Foster Dulles who, upon succeeding Dean Acheson as secretary of state in a Republican administration, immediately clashed with him. It was, indeed, around this time, Lukacs writes, that Kennan began to lose his footing at the State Department.

> What contributed to that was his nondemocratic (rather than antidemocratic) conviction that his job was to represent and help chart his country's interests in their relation to other states but not to the politicians of Congress, for many members of which he had little or no respect.

Another contributing cause was that, unlike his colleagues, Kennan remained unwilling to contemplate the continued division of Europe between West and East.

Superficially, George Kennan might, for a time, have passed for a Cold Warrior. In 1948, he played a major part in establishing the Central Intelligence Agency ("The greatest mistake I ever made," he later said), proposed "a 'directorate' for overt and covert political warfare," and recommended the creation of an Office of Special Projects at the State Department (a suggestion approved by President Truman) that would, among other activities, engage in covert operations inside the Soviet Union. Yet he also drafted a memorandum, "U.S. Objectives Towards Russia," arguing that attempts to promote the dissolution of the Soviet satellite states in Eastern Europe should not be extended to the Soviet Union itself. In this last effort, the tendency of Kennan's thought suggested itself. George Kennan, Lukacs writes, wished to correct, not terminate, the division of Europe. He had high hopes for the "Finlandization" of parts of Eastern Europe and was prepared to back a plan by which both the United States and the Soviet Union would withdraw reciprocally from their spheres of influence. But, Lukacs adds,

> That was not the main American policy in 1948-49 and not for more than forty years. What the ruling powers in Washington accepted were marginal policies affecting eastern Europe, with their purpose of causing troubles for the Soviet Union.

And so, when, at the end of 1948, General Marshall was replaced by Acheson as secretary of state, Kennan, while remaining an important government advisor, found his position an increasingly chilly and unsheltered one.

In 1953, James Burnham published *Containment or Liberation?* in which he attacked George Kennan for having embraced an essentially liberal policy toward the Soviet Union—a charge John Lukacs rejects on Kennan's behalf. Rather, he says, by 1953 Kennan believed that anticommunism was a greater danger than anti-anticommunism. More was involved, he thought, than foreign policy. "Kennan's concerns were with nothing less than the mind and character of his native people," with his country's relationship with itself. George Kennan, a conservative and traditionalist patriot, was discovering that his worst adversaries were the nationalist (populist) "conservatives." He deplored the determined ignorance of Americans and the self-adulation that confrontation and comparison with other cultures encouraged in them. He grew increasingly distressed by the decline of American culture and civility—and of American politics. As one who disbelieved in a supposed responsibility on the part of the United States to overthrow despotic or simply unpalatable regimes, he considered Washington's military involvement in Somalia in the early 90's as an adventure the Founding Fathers would surely have condemned. Contemplating the inevitability of the coming Iraq War, he wrote in a letter, "What is being done to our country today is surely something from which we will never be able to restore the sort of a country you and I have known." Disgusted by the self-congratulatory posturing of the "conservative" party following the collapse of the Soviet Union, he wrote (in the *New York Times*):

> The suggestion that any American administration had the power to influence decisively the course of a tremendous political upheaval, in another great country on another side of the globe is intrinsically silly and childish. . . . [This] is not a fit occasion for pretending that the end of [the Cold War] was a triumph for anyone, and particularly one for which any American political party could properly claim credit.

The voice is that of a patrician—and of a prophet: In it, Lukacs perceives "a conscience of a nation," summoning the American people to reconsider the meaning and the end of "Progress," which includes that vast, collective, mobilized, nationalizing effort that has gone unchallenged and unquestioned by them for more than a century and a half.

It was his character that formed, shaped, and directed that voice; character of a sort that should in no way be diminished because it was too sterling to heed, or care about, the adverse worldly consequences to itself that its honesty and truthfulness ensured. C

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Marching Through Whatever

by James O. Tate

Defending Dixie: Essays in Southern History and Culture
by Clyde N. Wilson
Columbia, SC: The Foundation for American Education; 370 pp., $24.95

◆

This gathering of essays, studies, reviews, and occasional pieces is united by its subject and fused by the imagination and knowledge of the author. Clyde Wilson has responded not only to a host of opportunities as a professional historian and scholar but to sundry provocations as a lively contemporary who knows the implications of ideological distortions and of political logrolling. This Distinguished Professor has not said so explicitly, but I say that current and even emerging and future events have echoed and will echo what his sense of history has said to him, and have justified and will justify his examination of the past and its connections with the present.

Those connections are most striking not so much as deep continuities but as unaccountable absurdities. The funniest pages in this book, if these may be identified from among the strenuous competition, are those devoted to an episode in 2004 when nine Democratic presidential candidates were scheduled to appear at the Longstreet Theater on the campus of the University of South Carolina, a venue which had previously featured appearances by two presidents of the United States and a pope. Suddenly, it was discovered that the theater was named after the Rev. Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, president of a predecessor institution and others, author of *Georgia Scenes* (1835), defender of slavery on biblical grounds, and advocate of secession. The gathering of Democratic contenders was hastily removed to nearby Drayton Hall, the name of which not only had Old South connections but was located on streets with similarly contaminated names. There seemed to be a pattern here—a Southern pattern. The politicians were seeking Southern votes in the South, but the context had somehow to be airbrushed or gelded of all historical associations—the whole thing seemed to be more a mental-health issue than a political matter, in the ordinary sense.

So we would have to be reminded that such an inane, if not insane, episode is related to others, such as the various censorious and uninformed attempts to ban the Confederate Battle Flag from public display. The issue has its own interest, but the reaction to, or spin regarding, the "issue" is even more compelling. George W. Bush, in South Carolina in 2000, said one thing about the flag issue and later did another. John McCain tried to pander to the apparent constituency for the flag and later claimed that he had lied about it. Dick Cheney was later involved in another grotesque episode involving the Confederate Battle Flag at a funeral. Though these actions cast quite a shadow on those individuals, what is more important is a pattern that must be seen as bizarre: the repeated manipulation of Southern votes by Republicans who hold Southern people and values in contempt. This little game has been revealed for what it is for quite some time. The end of such hypocrisy is in sight, and that is going to be too bad for Republican officeholders.

Of course, there has been some fun along the way. Clyde Wilson has good reason for emphasizing the South Carolina events, but there have been other stories as well. There was a call from several directions, including from national "conservative" publications, for the correction of the Georgia state flag to the pre-1956 version. But now that the matter has indeed worked out to the old state flag, too few are aware that its design is derived from "the Stars and Bars," the flag of the Confederate nation. Oops!

How crude the political class is, after all, and how rude the columnists and talking heads who affect to cobble together a coalition that includes Southern votes but allows nothing to Southern interests or identity or history. And that is just the point of Wilson's essays. He is defending Dixie because she is under continual attack. Now why should that be so, so many years after Appomattox, and even so many years after the centennial of the Late Unpleasantness, and the concomitant recapitulation of Reconstruction which is now so institutionalized that Southern senators today support its extension?

After all, demonization and hatred of the South are now presented in Southern universities as Southern history, politics, and literature; since the 1960's, the radicalization of Southern institutions has been part of a destructive, power-seeking ideology. Beating the South like a gong has been an effective political stance for a long time, and, if that were not so, then Clyde Wilson would have had that much less call to write as he has done of Southern history and culture. Covering theories and visions, politics and theory, the Revolution, the Civil War, the history of the country, the exfoliations of literature and the mass media, and the stories of heroes and rascals, he has written a book that is not for beleaguered Southerners alone but for everyone interested in what it means to be American, what it means to be free, and what it means to live in a community.

Jefferson Davis declared that the War settled the issue of the practicability of secession but not the principle, and that the issues of the constitutional crisis would sooner or later reassert themselves. He was right about that and a lot of other things as well. But to know all this, as would benefit many citizens of Boston and Minneapolis, not to mention Tuscaloosa and Biloxi, Professor Wilson's tour of several horizons will prove of immediate and lasting value.

Contributing editor James O. Tate is a professor of English literature at Dowling College on Long Island.

The Recovery of Metrical Verse

by David Middleton

Writing Metrical Poetry: Contemporary Lessons for Mastering Traditional Forms
by William Baer
Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books; 264 pp., $16.99

◆

From before the time of Homer until the middle of the 19th century, almost all poets in the Western literary tradition wrote measured verse—that is, poems with a regular repeated rhythmical pattern. Then, in a little over a hundred years, from Walt Whitman through the 1960's, a new form of writing (free verse) fully emerged that not only challenged metrical verse but almost replaced it. Thus, an art form that, for three millen-

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nia or more, had accommodated and helped bring into being the poetic works of Homer, Vergil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Yeats was in danger of being lost. Still, even during the heyday of the modernist revolt against traditional verse, a number of first-rate poets kept measured verse alive—W.B. Yeats (considered by many as the greatest poet of the modern period), Robert Bridges (poet laureate of England), Robert Frost (who famously compared writing free verse with playing tennis with the net down), and California-based poet Yvor Winters, whose shift from free to metrical verse in the late 1920's attracted such poets as Donald Stanford, J.V. Cunningham, and Edgar Bowers, many of whose own students played a major role in what is now called the New Formalist Revival. This new measured verse came into view in the late 1970's with the publication of the first collections by such poets as Timothy Steele, who studied with J.V. Cunningham at Brandeis University. Moreover, as Baer notes, during later decades of the free-verse ascendancy, other excellent poets such as America's Richard Wilbur, Anthony Hecht, and X.J. Kennedy, as well as England's W.H. Auden and Philip Larkin, continued to write metrical verse against the grain of the times. (So, incidentally, did many of the Southern Fugitive poets, such as John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Donald Davidson.)

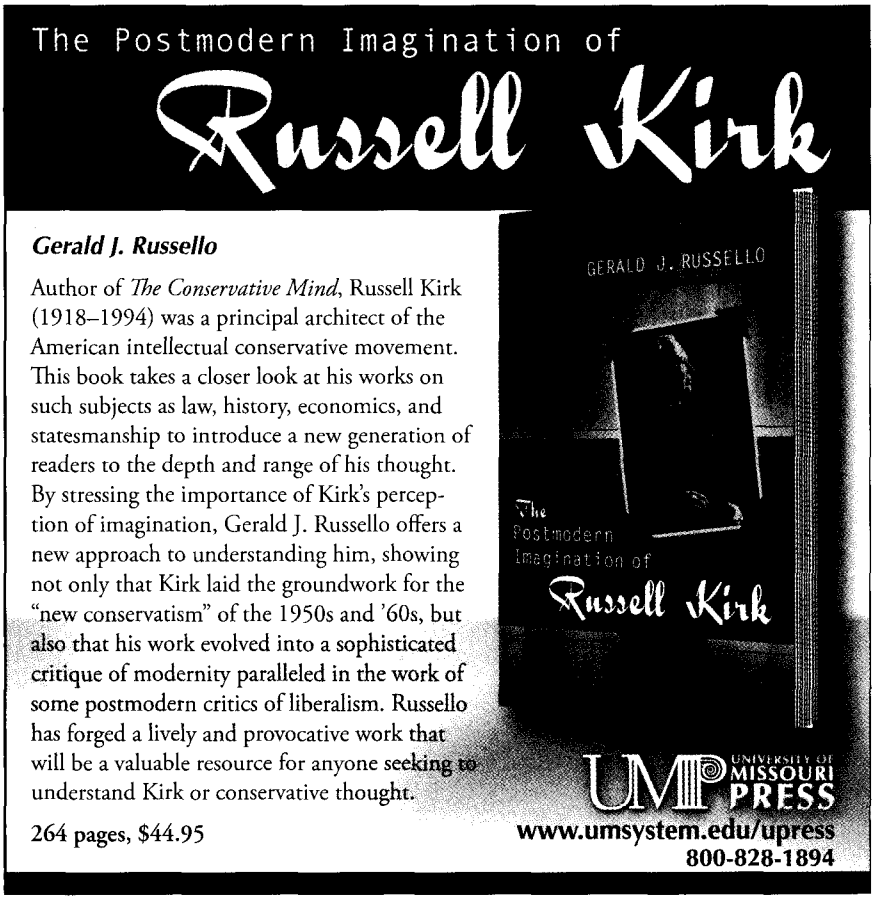
William Baer, poet, translator, professor of creative writing at Evansville University in Evansville, Indiana, and editor of the *Formalist* (1990-2004), a poetry journal that published exclusively metrical verse, has now written a comprehensive handbook that begins with a concise history of measured verse in the Western tradition (especially verse in English) and then provides a complete guide to the technicalities of the craft—or, in medieval terms, the "mystery"—of writing metrical verse. Baer's book includes a brief history and an analysis of the limitations of free verse and a recounting of the development of the New Formalist Revival from the 1970's to the present.

Each chapter in *Writing Metrical Poetry* takes up one or another element of writing poems in which both syllables and accents are counted (*i.e.*, traditional accentual-syllabic poetry). These components include various metrical feet (iambs, trochees, spondees), line lengths (monometer through octometer), poetic forms and stanzas (quatrains, couplets, blank verse, sonnets, epigrams, limericks, and nonsense verse such as Lewis Carroll's "The Jabberwocky"), imported forms such as the French villanelle, and lesser-known forms, including ones invented by a single poet, such as Gerard Manley Hopkins's 11-line curtal (*i.e.*, "curtailed") sonnet. Brief attention is also given to other metrical systems—purely accentual verse (as in *Beowulf*), syllabic verse (such as the haiku), and the duration-based classical verse in which length, not stress, governs.

Baer writes in a lively, conversational, and humorous style that will make the book appealing to anyone who wants to write measured verse or who, as a general reader, just wants to understand better the nature of traditional poetry. Every chapter contains a generous sampling of passages and whole poems that illustrate Baer's points. Each of these samples is followed immediately by a comment from Baer explaining the significance of the sample. Exercises are also included. Most importantly, the book is filled with short "Notes on . . . " passages that address issues likely to confront any poet trying to master this craft. Such notes include ones on why poets must learn the technical language of metrical poetry, on the necessity of deep and wide reading, on the kind of freedom provided only by following the rules of verse writing, on the usefulness of constructive criticism, on the need for strict self-editing, on why consideration must be shown to the reader (not too many arcane allusions, please!), on the protocols of submitting verse for publication, and on a number of other subjects.

If all of this seems to make the composition of measured verse a daunting prospect, Baer reminds us that, as the poet Derek Walcott has stated, in writing such verse "the difficulty is the joy." What we naturally expect of an athlete or a musician or a dancer—constant practice and a disciplined attention to technique—we too often fail to demand of our contemporary poets. The joy of applying heart and mind to learning the mysteries of this craft is summed up well by Robert Frost: "All the fun's in how you say a thing." The subtle modulation of rhythm, rhyme, and other sound effects to highlight meaning makes accentual-syllabic patterning (combining Saxon and French linguistic traits) an unsurpassable mode of poetic discourse.

As Baer rightly states, the mastery of such a skill requires patience and diligence, but the result—that classical com-


The Postmodern Imagination of
Russell Kirk
Gerald J. Russello
Author of The Conservative Mind, Russell Kirk (1918–1994) was a principal architect of the American intellectual conservative movement. This book takes a closer look at his works on such subjects as law, history, economics, and statesmanship to introduce a new generation of readers to the depth and range of his thought. By stressing the importance of Kirk's perception of imagination, Gerald J. Russello offers a new approach to understanding him, showing not only that Kirk laid the groundwork for the "new conservatism" of the 1950s and '60s, but also that his work evolved into a sophisticated critique of modernity paralleled in the work of some postmodern critics of liberalism. Russello has forged a lively and provocative work that will be a valuable resource for anyone seeking to understand Kirk or conservative thought.
264 pages, $44.95
GERALD J. RUSSELLO
The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk
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bination of teaching and delight memorably presented—is of profound cultural significance. The great themes of poetry remain pretty much the same through history—love, war, nature, religion, death, adventure, philosophical speculation. What changes is the need for each new generation of poets to express these themes by generally employing the idiom of the times (an idiom sometimes rightly elevated and enhanced) and by mainly using what Coleridge called the *communis linguis*—words found and understood in all regions of a country and at all levels of human society. Such language allows the poet to filter the great universal themes through the familiar, sharable particulars of his own life, time, and place—Hardy's Wessex, for example. And who among us is not moved by the simple yet powerful common language of Yvor Winters' "A Leave-Taking," in which he offers this poignant epigram on a stillborn son: "I, who never kissed your head, / Lay these ashes in their bed, / That which I could do have done. / Now farewell, my newborn son"?

In his discussion of the couplet and of that short pointed poem called the epigram, Baer reminds us that poetry can also be humorous. Much of this humor comes from wit sharpened by rhyme, rhyme being a device that most free verse avoids. Thus, we have Lord Jeffrey's epigram-as-epitaph on Peter Robinson: "Here lies the preacher, judge, and poet, Peter, / Who broke the laws of God, and man, and metre." Equally amusing is J.V. Cunningham's jab at a modern relativist: "This Humanist whom no belief constrained / Grew so broad-minded he was scatter-brained." Many readers of *Chronicles* may also appreciate a recent epigram (not included here) by Timothy Steele: "Words don't match things, and authors are erased; / Reality reflects the theorist's taste. / Yet, to the grief of all, the texts fight back, / Whether it's *Hamlet*, *Emma*, or Iraq" ("A Short History of Post-structuralism" in *Toward the Winter Solstice*, Swallow Press, 2006).

Baer closes his book with an Appendix on the New Formalist Revival and with a compendium of quotations from poets ancient and modern on the nature and importance of measured verse. One center of this revival, Baer notes, was Baton Rouge, where, in the 1970's, a group of graduate-student poets gathered around Donald Stanford, editor of the *Southern Review*, formalist poet, former student of Yvor Winters, and admirer of the poems of Allen Tate. Among those "LSU Formalists" well known today are Wyatt Prunty of the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, and the late Alabama poet John Finlay. Here, and in similar circumstances, in small, informal groups or one by one, poets—like a scattered Gideon's band—began to recover a greatly threatened 3,000-year tradition.

Poetry is the rightful possession of all human beings. It begins in the womb with a prenatal awareness of our mother's rhythmical heartbeat and continues in our perception of the great rhythmic patterns of breath and sex, the comings and goings of the tides, and the coursings of the stars. (It is fascinating to note that Christ died, according to Matthew, crying out in the verse of a psalm, and that Socrates turned Aesop into verse as he awaited execution.) Poetry fills our lives from nursery rhymes, hymns, and ballads to the lyrics of popular music, Bible verses, and even proverbial sayings such as Ben Franklin's "Early to bed, early to rise / Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise"—or a modern wag's retort: "Early to bed, early to rise / And your girl goes out with other guys."

Such humorous poems as those quoted above are reminders that rhyming poetry is well suited to satire. Thus, metrical poetry—though certainly practiced by poets of all cultural and political persuasions—should be quite natural to the traditional conservative poet committed to defending what T.S. Eliot called "the permanent things." As William Baer has stated elsewhere,

> it's . . . logical to expect that individuals who value tradition and order would tend to write their poems in the time-tested metric that has dominated English-language poetry from Geoffrey Chaucer to Richard Wilbur. Some, myself included, would even tend to see the underlying structure of meter as a poetic representation of the provident order of God's universe.

Or, as Robert Frost once quipped about God telling Moses how to make verse, "Tell them Iamb, Jehovah said, and meant it."

David Middleton, poet-in-residence and head of the Department of Languages and Literature at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana, is the author of Beyond the Chandeleurs *and* The Habitual Peacefulness of Gruchy: Poems After Pictures by Jean-François Millet, *both published by Louisiana State University Press.*

The Hollow Men

by Fr. Michael P. Orsi

The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher
by Debby Applegate
New York: Doubleday; 544 pp., $27.95

◆

Debby Applegate's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher*, treats a wide range of subjects: religion, politics, social upheaval, war, and clerical sex scandals. And, while such a list might sound as if it were referring to contemporary America, the events recounted here occurred a century-and-a-half ago. In chronicling Beecher's life, Applegate, a professor of American studies at Yale and Wesleyan Universities, brings to light the era Beecher helped shape and makes clear to the astute reader that his influence remains with us today.

A son of the Rev. Lyman Beecher, a well-known Congregationalist preacher and professor, Henry Ward Beecher (1813-87) possessed impressive oratorical skills. He was pastor of one of the largest churches of his day, Brooklyn's famous Plymouth Church, as well as a key spokesman for the antislavery cause. And he preached the so-called Gospel of Love, which placed him on the cutting edge of 19th-century liberal Protestantism. In many ways, Beecher was progenitor of the socioreligious phenomenon that would eventually be called the "mega-church" movement.

Beecher was reared a strict New England Congregationalist. However, the rigidity of his upbringing was challenged by two factors: an insatiable need for love (owing partly to the death of his mother when he was three years old) and his family's migration to the less religiously restrictive Midwestern frontier, when his father became head of Lane Theological Seminary near Cincinnati. From these conflicting personal currents would emerge a highly personalized doctrine

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that was light on theology, sketchy on the consequences of sin, and heavy on individual and social concerns. Beecher's pulpit prowess, his belief in Herbert Spencer's concept of "evolutionary meliorism," and his proclamation of the nonthreatening Gospel of Love made him an international *cause célèbre*. The effectiveness of his message can be attributed to its timeliness. It found rich soil in America's broadening democratic ethos and the rise of pragmatism in the 19th century.

The election of Andrew Jackson in 1829 brought to a close the limited republic of philosopher-statesmen envisioned by America's Founding Fathers, as the growth of raw democracy that broadened the voting franchise weakened traditional social hierarchies, including the hold that established religions had on the people. It opened the door to the rise of populist faiths, such as Methodism, which were based less on dogma and more on sentimentalism and ministering to emotional needs. This religion grew rapidly in the developing Midwest, where Henry Ward Beecher spent the early years of his ministry.

Beecher's entrepreneurial instincts and pragmatic approach to life enabled him to borrow from Methodism and to adapt his church's message and style of worship accordingly. He built his ministry not on orthodox Christian doctrine (which includes such disturbing dogmas as Original Sin and Hell) but on what he perceived people wanted to hear—the empathetic "personalism" that the market for religious ideas was demanding. As Applegate puts it, Beecher's message was successful because "he was so aware of the world's alienation and pain." Such a "grassroots" approach to religion encourages an easy adaptability, away from theological truths and toward societal problems and personal needs. It greatly enhances the power of charismatic preachers, since it offers "cheap grace" in the form of quick solutions to life's most vexing challenges. For evidence, we need only reflect on the influence wielded by today's star preachers, such as Joel Osteen, Rick Warren, and T.D. Jakes—all of whom are Beecher's spiritual heirs.

Populist religion also gravitates toward politics. Abraham Lincoln recognized Beecher's stance against slavery as a valuable asset to his own presidential ambitions, visiting Beecher's church as a candidate and, later, courting him at the White House. In appreciation of Beecher's support during the Civil War, Lincoln gave him the honor of delivering the keynote address at the reclamation of Fort Sumter in 1865.

Beecher realized the personal value of getting along with those in power, adjusting his loyalties to his own advantage. For example, despite his strong and vocal opposition to slavery, after Lincoln's assassination, Beecher supported the retrogressive President Andrew Johnson (1865-69). And, in 1885, he switched his allegiance to the party of the Democracy and Grover Cleveland, whose election all but ended federal efforts to ensure freed slaves the rights conferred by the 14th and 15th Amendments. How could Beecher have been so flexible? Applegate's answer is simply that he enjoyed the prestige and the patronage that came from associating with those in political power. In some ways, Beecher anticipated the multiparty relationships maintained in our own time by the Rev. Billy Graham, who, though certainly not a moral pragmatist, has managed to get along with every president since Eisenhower.

Beecher had serious character flaws, in addition to his apparent fascination with political power. Allegations of marital infidelity clouded the later years of his ministry; indeed, they command too many pages of this book. Applegate's account does provide some worthwhile insights into sexual exploitation by the clergy, however. The personal magnetism, verbal mesmerism, and kindly manner exerted by a gifted pastor inevitably garner a certain number of female admirers—a dynamic that has accounted for the fall of many clergymen. In Beecher's case, it led to a trial for adultery, and both his behavior and the testimony he gave are indicative of an acute ability to compartmentalize and prevaricate. In addition, his manic accumulation of material goods suggests an inner emptiness.

Noticeably missing from the story of Beecher's later life is any mention of the devotional prayer to which he was given in his younger years. This apparent lack of an interior prayer life may be best attributed to his loss of faith in a personal God. Perhaps this was the cause of his decline in moral discipline and his willingness to compromise pastoral moral standards that should be above reproach. In this area, Applegate lets Beecher off too easily. Her comparison of his shortcomings with those of John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton, and Martin Luther King, Jr., makes it seem as if she is excusing all these men on psychological grounds—which may indicate an acquiescence on her part in the present culture that extols candor and doubts the ability of men to practice virtue.

With the 2008 presidential-primary campaigns already under way, American church leaders have another opportunity to speak out on the subject of personal morality as well as on current political issues. Unfortunately, the thinking that Beecher worked so hard to promote—and which persists today—encourages pastoral focus on the latter, but not the former.

Fr. Michael P. Orsi is chaplain and Research Fellow in Law and Religion at the Ave Maria School of Law in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

A Moderate Proposal

by Andrea Kirk Assaf

The Right To Be Wrong: Ending the Culture War Over Religion in America
by Kevin Seamus Hasson
San Francisco: Encounter Books; 176 pp., $25.95

◆

In America today, nearly every month brings a new occasion to renew the Culture War over religion in the public square. By next year, our sensitive multicultural elites might insist on celebrating "Hearts and Flowers Day" on February 14 and "Drink Beer and Wear Green Day" on March 17.

Americans have not always been such zealous secularists, Kevin Seamus Hasson, founder and chairman of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, argues in *The Right To Be Wrong*. He ably recounts the surprising religious intolerance of some of our earliest settlers, the Puritans, and with lively descriptions paints an unflattering portrait of their attempts to establish a theocracy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. (Even their efforts were nothing new in New England: Shortly after the First Thanksgiving, the Pilgrims banned the few Anglicans in their midst from

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publicly celebrating Christmas.) Religious persecutions did not end with the first generations of Pilgrims and the Puritans; for a hundred years, Quakers were persecuted for their practice of "conscientious objection."

Hasson identifies two extremes in American history, which are still very much alive today, in the form of "Puritans" and "Park Rangers." Today's Puritans are those who, like their namesakes, continue to try to restrict freedom of religion to themselves, the sole possessors of "truth." When the rest of society refuses to conform to their understanding of truth, these Puritans fall into the same trap as their secularist opponents and argue that truth and freedom cannot coexist. At the other extreme are the politically correct "Park Rangers," named after California park administrators who banned New Agers from worshiping a parking barrier shaped like a Hindu deity.

According to Hasson, what kept the United States from becoming a Puritan theocracy is what can save us from the politically correct Park Rangers: the First Amendment. If properly understood, Hasson explains, the sort of separation of Church and state suggested by the First Amendment's Establishment Clause does not imply state-sponsored atheism; yet that is the message the Supreme Court has been sending through its muddled rulings. Indeed, even Justice Sandra Day O'Connor admitted that the lower courts' application of the Establishment Clause has been "amorphous" and "distorted," while Justice Anthony Kennedy described the Court's usage of the same as "flawed in its fundamentals and unworkable in practice." Most damningly, Justice Antonin Scalia remarked that "we are now so bold that we no longer feel the need even to pretend that our haphazard course of Establishment Clause decisions is governed by any principle."

Hasson offers a series of humorous, shocking, and infuriatingly outlandish episodes that illustrate the ways in which the Puritans have shaped our contemporary American jurisprudence on the First Amendment. This is not your ordinary constitutional history: Hasson is a skilled storyteller who knows his subject well. For over a decade, he and the Becket Fund have batted a thousand on behalf of religious liberty in U.S. courts, representing clients from a variety of faiths.

What guides the Becket Fund lawyers—and what has been the key to their success—is their commitment to defending individual human dignity. They believe that, as both spiritual and social creatures, men have an inherent right to the free expression of their religious belief in public. Hasson calls the ban on all religion in the public square inhuman, not merely unconstitutional. For him, the debate over religious freedom itself has been muddled, because it has been framed incorrectly: The questions we should be asking, Hasson suggests, are not about the Divine identity but our own. The solution to the multiculturalist dilemma lies not in relativism or militant secularism or in theocracy, but in the recognition of the truth about human beings and the allowance of all religious expression rather than none, notwithstanding the fact that much of it may seem ridiculous, or even repulsive, to many people. Hasson's essential argument is that, while we may never come to an agreement on spiritual truths, we can find agreement in the truth about human nature. We can have pluralism without relativism: All religions cannot be equally true, but all people can possess an equal right to seek and express the truth. This approach, he believes, could bring a peaceful close to the Culture War here—and, perhaps, elsewhere.

In the book's final two pages, the author demonstrates the universality of the concept of religious liberty based on individual human dignity. Hasson was invited twice to be a guest on an Al Jazeera call-in show, thanks to his successful defense of two Muslim Newark police officers who had been prohibited from growing their beards by the local Park Rangers. Appropriately, Hasson's very first caller was "Mohammed-from-Mecca," who could not understand why this dialogue with the infidel Hasson was permitted in the first place. Mohammed asked, "Why not just wage jihad on him?" In Hasson's estimation, Mohammed is a "Pilgrim's Pilgrim."

What both the Park Rangers and Mohammed the Pilgrim need to learn, he concludes, is that, legally, we all have a right to be wrong. We all are free to believe and even to insist that others are wrong, but we must recognize that each of us has a legal right to hold and express wrong beliefs. "Writ large," Hasson writes, "that is the solution to the culture war."

Andrea Kirk Assaf writes from Rome.

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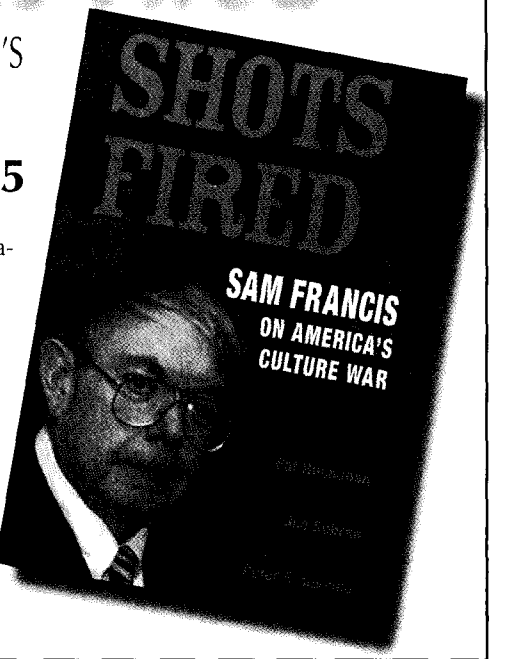
—*Aaron D. Wolf*



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by Aaron D. Wolf

The Sea Gave Up the Dead

"Lord, he looks so peaceful," Miss Alice said tearfully. I braced myself for a long two hours at my post—and that was before the funeral started. Interrupting my thoughts, she looked up at me and spoke in a whisper that was loud enough for Pastor Brown, who was standing on the other side of the casket, to hear. "We've missed you at church, Jimmy. Don't be a stranger!"

I'd been a stranger at Zion Baptist Church for two years, ever since I'd started Arkansas State University here in Jonesboro. Most of the girls I'd go to youth group to see were gone now—off to college in Little Rock, Memphis. And when I started going on call nights and weekends at Johnson & Son, doing removals and assisting at funerals, I came up with more reasons.

"Howdy, Jim—I almost didn't recognize you!" whispered Sam Manning in a faux hillbilly voice, shuffling to the left of the casket, vise grip on my right hand. "Don't let that book-learning get you all *corn*-fused." I smiled and nodded.

The visitation line had died down after about a half-hour, as those who had to work and wouldn't be staying for the funeral had gone through, and the crowd of those family and close friends who would stay for the funeral hadn't yet arrived. Buddy Parkin—today's "case," as my boss had said—was dressed out in a nice blue polyester suit brought over by his daughter, Sarah, the day after we'd picked him up, wedding ring showing on his left hand, folded over his right. I'd known the family since I was little—saw him and his wife, Miss Jolene, at church every Sunday. She'd passed on a few years back. Breast cancer. Sarah, their only daughter, lived across town. They'd have catfish and hushpuppies every Thursday night at the Fish Boat.

Pastor Brown walked over and took a long look at Buddy and sighed, almost happily. "Well, he *does* look peaceful," he admitted, glancing toward me as he finished.

I grimaced slightly enough to merit his question, "Whatta they have you doing over here at Johnson? Is that a pre-med internship or something?"

"Pre-law," I corrected him, trying to sound respectful, "I'm pre-law at school. Actually, it's just a job. They'd rather have someone else do the removals and stand here for two hours, at half the pay. It's still better—"

"Better than flippin' burgers!" he agreed, with a wild-eyed look that suggested *not really*. "What's that involve, removals?"

"Well sir, you know, when we get a case . . . when somebody passes, the family or whoever finds him calls the funeral home or the Craighead County coroner, and one way or another, Johnson's got to come out and get him, even in the middle of the night. So they call my cellphone and I throw on this suit and meet one of the directors here. Got to be here in 30 minutes. Then we drive over there in the van—people say 'hearse,' but they don't call 'em hearses—and have to get him . . . "

"Well, you're a big strong fella, so I reckon that's why . . . "

"Yeah, but it's tough sometimes. Like with Budd . . . Mr. Parkin. He was in his bathroom upstairs when his heart gave out, and you gotta put him on a gurney and get that thing around the corner and down the stairs."

"Sarah, honey," Pastor Brown interrupted me, calling to a row of chairs on the side of the room, "if you or Tom needs anything, just let me know, OK?" He'd caught her sobbing out of the corner of his eye. She smiled and nodded. "Thanks, Pastor," her husband affirmed.

"That's gotta be difficult, Jim. Was she real upset when y'all got there?"

"She found him there next to the sink," I answered. "Coroner said he was probably gone before he hit the floor. Said he must've had several blockages. When we went in there, . . . "

"Looked pretty bad," Pastor Brown finished.

"Sir?"

"He looked pretty bad, you were gonna say, right? He wasn't . . . didn't look 'peaceful.'"

Now I was staring at Buddy Parkin. "No, to be honest, his face was sort of distorted," I said, after a long pause, then stared some more. "I mean, people always say 'she looks so natural,' or 'I bet he was seeing Jesus,' but they . . . " (I dialed down my volume a little more) "that ain't how they look when we get there."

"That surprise you, Jim?"

"Well, no, I mean . . . what do you think he was seeing—or thinking?"

Pastor Brown smiled, but seriously. "I don't know, but I bet he was thinking, 'Lord, my chest hurts!'"

I was still staring, and the humor slipped past me. "People don't know it, but those looks aren't natural. They fix 'em up with cotton in their cheeks to make a little almost-smile. Then they shoot this—they call it a ligature—this plastic thing into the mouth to keep it shut looking like that. Then they run that embalming fluid through. Colors their skin. You know, you can actually see that stuff travelling through their veins, if they've got good ones. You can watch the arm go pink again."

I was fixing to start telling him about how they'd cover up bruises and wounds with makeup and blue lighting when he interrupted again. "Well, none of that's too big for God, Jimmy."

"I'm sorry?"

"You don't like hearing about how 'he looks peaceful' because of what you've seen. But you're not taking into account the Resurrection. You know, when they laid the Lord Jesus in that tomb, He was . . . "

"Pastor Brown?" a female voice half-whispered through a bereaved grin. "I'm Buddy's cousin Irene, from Lepanto."

"Well, ma'am, I'm so sorry for—"

"I was hoping to sing this number—I've got a tape with the background music, and *I was planning* on singing Buddy's favorite song at the service."

"Ma'am, we've already planned out the service and selected some fine hymns—'In the Sweet By-and-By,' 'Beulah Land,' 'The Old Rugged Cross,' and—"

"I am family!" she furrowed her brow. "We worked this all out with Sarah

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and Tom on Tuesday morning after he passed on."

"I Saw the Light!" she said, indignantly. When Pastor Brown didn't reply for a few seconds, she added, "Hank Williams?"

"Yes, I know," he assured her.

Irene looked at Buddy, as if she hoped he'd back her up. "I just know he'd want us to hear that Gospel message."

Pastor Brown put his arm around her shoulder firmly. "Excuse us for a minute, Jim."

Quickly, she shoved a cassette toward me: "Here's that tape—you're with the funeral home, right?"

As Pastor Brown started to guide her over toward Sarah and Tom, he turned back. "Jim," he said over his shoulder, gravely, "What do they look like when they pull them out of the water?"

Flummoxed, I glanced back to notice that the line was building again. As I drew breath, I noticed Pastor Brown, Cousin Irene, Sarah, and Tom were already having it out on the side of the room.

What did he mean? I wondered, as Buddy's extended family filed by. *That boy they pulled out of Lake Frierson was white—soapy looking. I'd seem him on the table—adipocere, they call it, where the layer of fat beneath the skin—*

The pianist started playing through a verse of "Sweet By-and-By," and, startled, I hurried to the back, next to the pall-bearers, whom I'd forgotten to instruct. There'd be time after the service, I thought nervously. We sang four verses, and Pastor Brown went up to the podium and, in typical Baptist fashion, opened in prayer, then read the obituary. "Lyle 'Buddy' Parkin, 64, born in West Memphis to A.V. and Louise Parkin, died Monday of a massive heart attack. He is survived . . ."

He'd been missing for six months when some fisherman found him, turned up near the big weedbed where the bass are in spring. We'd picked him up at the morgue—his mama was weeping uncontrollably. "He looks so white," she kept saying, "like an angel."

"Brother Buddy loved Gospel music," Pastor Brown was saying, "and his favorite was an old song written by Luther Presley. The Zion Baptist Quartet is coming now to sing it, and you can join in if you know it—'Praise the Lord! I'll Have a New Life.'" And away they went.

On the resurrection morning
When all th' dead in Christ shall rise
I'll have a new body,
Praise the Lord, I'll have a new life

Sewed in weakness, raised in power
Ready to live in Paradise
I'll have a new body,
Praise the Lord, I'll have a new life

I couldn't help thinking, *This music is a little too happy for a funeral. What were they thinking?* Then, I felt that tape in my pocket and glanced over at Cousin Irene. She was fuming.

Pastor Brown cleared his throat—he was in the middle of a Scripture reading, something from Revelation. And he was looking right at me. "'And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.'

"Dearly Beloved, when I asked Sarah what her daddy's favorite verse was, she said 'Revelations 20:13.' I said, 'That's a funny verse to be your favorite. What made him like that one?' And you know what she said? 'Cause he knew that, if the Lord could put someone back together who'd fell in the sea, He could raise up anyone. Nothing's too big for God.'" ©

"What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants are the kings, Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?

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by Scott P. Richert

A Highly Personal History

We're about 50 miles east of Toledo, cruising along the Ohio Turnpike on our way to Cleveland for the wedding of longtime *Chronicles* contributor Tom Piatak. Satisfied from a lunch of cabbage rolls, paprikas dumplings, and Hungarian sausage at the original Tony Packo's, I have Amy's MacBook open on my lap and Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.* album shuffling on the iPod. "Dancing in the Dark" isn't helping me shake the feeling that I should quit browsing news items in NetNewsWire, avoiding the writing I intended to do. ("I get up in the evening, and I ain't got nothing to say / I come home in the morning, go to bed feeling the same way.")

The *Rockford Register Star*'s newsfeed provides only headlines, so I'm running through it quickly and inattentively. As I move on to the next item, the words of the previous headline finally register: "Local author, historian Lundin dies."

Startled, I read Amy the headline, then pull out the cellphone to call the office. When Aaron answers, I ask him if he's heard the news. "I don't have internet access out here on the turnpike, so I've only seen the headline. What happened?"

He hasn't heard, so he pulls up the *Register Star*'s website. The story is under a different headline now: "Lundin was Rockford's 'Historical Consciousness.'" Indeed. Rockford has had her share of historians over the years (though relatively few serious ones since the 1940's), but only Lundin ever truly earned the title of "Rockford's historian." Through his books, most notably *Rockford: An Illustrated History*, and his constant presence whenever and wherever anyone might require an historical perspective on the challenges facing Rockford (especially in manufacturing), Lundin worked tirelessly to remind Rockfordians of their heritage. His interest didn't stop at the borders of the city, or even of Winnebago County—a proud Swede, he wrote a brief book on Swedish immigration to Rockford—but like every good patriot, he put those broader interests in the service of his hometown. He placed himself in its service as well: Jon cut short a promising academic career at Yale and Oxford, where he was completing his dissertation on a Jacobite poet, to return home. It may not be fair to say that, if something had no relevance to Rockford, Jon wasn't interested in it; but in the time I knew him, he certainly was much less likely to talk about it, and he always had a way of turning the conversation back to what *did* interest him—and what should have interested his interlocutors as well.

Unfortunately for me, our conversations were too few. I had met Jon a few times over the years, but my first extended discussion with him was held standing up in my office, when he came to buy a stack of the November 2005 issue of *Chronicles*. My column that month ("Revitalizing Rockford") was based on a speech I had given at a one-day conference on the crisis in manufacturing. Jon had come to the lunchtime talk by Rockford Institute board chairman David Hartman on border-adjusted value-added taxation, but he couldn't make it to the evening presentation, where I had presented a Frank Capra-esque solution to the crisis, drawn from the history of manufacturing in Rockford and from the contemporary experience of organizations such as the Manufacturing Alliance of the Rock River Valley.

When the column came out, MARRV board member Bob Trojan sent a copy to Lundin, which inspired the unexpected visit and the purchase. I couldn't have gotten a word in edgewise if I had wanted to—but I didn't want to, because it was fascinating just to listen to Jon explain the overlap he saw between his ideas and mine, and how manufacturing could yet be revived in Rockford, and how the future didn't have to look like the present. He asked if he could come back sometime to talk at greater length, and then, without warning, he said goodbye and was down the stairs and out the door.

Jon never did come back to the office, but, a little over a year later, we met up again, this time at an awards ceremony for MARRV. I had written a profile of MARRV in this space ("A Third Way," October 2006), and Dee Lynn, MARRV's secretary, had called to ask me to come. Under the pressure of deadlines, I almost blew it off at the last minute. I arrived late, and, on the way in, a young lady handed me a form to fill out for door prizes. I almost passed the opportunity by, but she gave me a pen, and I obediently filled out the ticket.

The top prize, I discovered when the drawing began, was a big-screen TV donated by Wal-Mart, and I spent the next several minutes in fear of actually winning it. I didn't have to worry: My ticket was drawn a few prizes before. Jon's friend Mike Molander had donated autographed copies of *Rockford: An Illustrated History* and Lundin's *Swedetown*, and I couldn't have been more pleased to win them. I've consulted *Rockford: An Illustrated History* extensively over the years, but I had always had to check a copy out of the library. Mike, who had attended the conference on manufacturing and read my article on MARRV, insisted that Jon should personalize the autographs.

When I presented the books to him, Jon told me how sorry he was that I had won his books and not the TV. I looked up at him in surprise—he stood a few inches above six feet—and saw the twinkle in his eyes. He had about as much love for Wal-Mart as I do. We spent the next half-hour discussing my columns, manufacturing, Wal-Mart, MARRV, National Lock (one of the greatest manufacturing success stories in the history of the United States, let alone in Rockford), and P.A. Peterson, perhaps Jon's greatest inspiration and one of the giants of Rockford industry, whose investments in local companies, and his philanthropic work, helped usher in Rockford's golden age. Then Jon asked if we might meet sometime for lunch, said goodbye, and once again was gone.

Thus began my acquaintance with Jon Lundin. I wish I could write "friendship," but that would be claiming more than I have a right to, and it would do a disservice to the many, many men and women in Rockford with whom Jon maintained lifelong friendships. I think that we were

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headed there, but we ran out of time.

After our discussion, I decided that I wouldn't wait for Jon to set a lunch date. I sent him a copy of my speech from the 2006 meeting of the John Randolph Club (published as "Are the Good Times Really Over?" the following January) and reminded him of his need for food. A few weeks later, he called. In the avalanche of e-mails that he received every day, he'd apparently missed mine. But Bob Trojan had once again intervened, sending him a copy of my speech. "Let's have lunch," Jon said. "Do you like Laotian food?"

Aaron and I hadn't been to the Lanexang, on the lower end of Seventh Street near Broadway (an area once known as "Swede Heaven"), in several years. Jon, however, ate there often, and always the same dish, and he always asked politely for a slight alteration, even though the waitress already knew how he liked his food. Their exchange illustrated a certain humility, a sense that Jon had that there was no particular reason why anyone should remember something about him, and that humility was reflected in our conversation. He offered me a copy of an editorial that he had written and told me I could keep it—if I wanted to. He had been trying to work through some of the same issues involving trade and manufacturing and free enterprise that I had touched on in my columns, and he wanted to know how our thoughts had so closely converged. The truth is that his historical work had helped me throw off the last vestiges of economic determinism. The great entrepreneurs and inventors of Rockford hadn't worried at all about comparative advantage, and the best factory owners had always paid their workers a living wage, no matter what others were paying in other parts of the country—and they still made a profit. We talked about whether competition from China made that impossible today, but Jon wasn't too worried—the answer lay in out-innovating the Chinese, discovering new processes and products that they simply could not produce (not yet, anyway).

As we were leaving, Jon pointed out a house at the end of the parking lot. "That was P.A. Peterson's house," back when Seventh Street was the heart of Rockford, before Peterson himself moved up to State Street. Mostly covered in siding, the stone exterior showed through at points, and Aaron and I suddenly saw through new eyes a building we had passed hundreds of times.

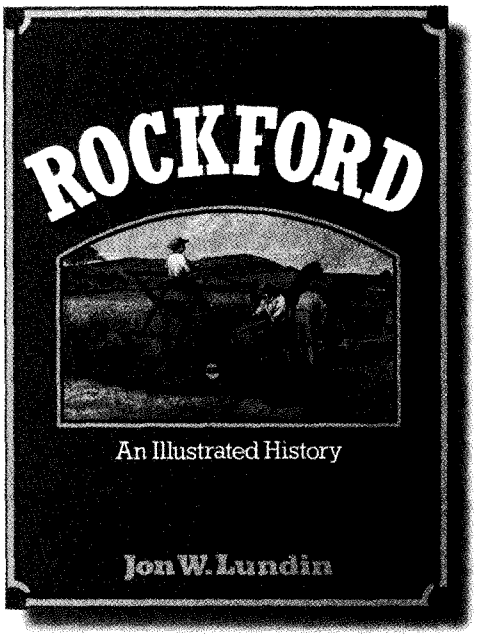
We had only one more lunch with Jon, again at the Lanexang. We talked about MARRV, and the recent announcement that this cooperative organization that we had both firmly believed would play an important role in the future of manufacturing in Rockford had been bought by SupplyCore, a Rockford defense contractor. Jon didn't hide his disappointment. Rockford would need something to take its place, and Jon was already giving some thought to the matter.

Jon had to leave early to sign some papers drawn up by the Illinois Department of Transportation. IDOT, he explained, is widening Kishwaukee Street based on a traffic study conducted years ago, when far more factory workers and trucks traveled the road. Though the current width can more than handle the current traffic, the bureaucracy could not be swayed, and IDOT had raised the threat of eminent domain on several houses that Jon had restored. In the end, he had convinced them to take just parts of the lawn and to save the houses, but he had to sign the papers that afternoon or the deal was off. Still, he hung around until less than five minutes before his meeting, not wanting to cut the conversation short.

As he left, he promised to get me a copy of his newest book, a biography of Rockford manufacturing legend Howard Colman. As Aaron and I settled up the bill, we talked about all of the questions we had for Jon that we would have to save for our next lunch. Now, those questions will go unanswered. *I wish I woulda known, I wish I coulda called ya, just to say goodbye . . .*

Jon Lundin was 64, though he could have passed for 15 years shy of that. Death came for him just a month before his 30th wedding anniversary. Two and a half months earlier, on February 22, as my family and I waited for a table at Altamore Ristorante to celebrate Amy's birthday, we could hear laughter and sounds of celebration in the dining room. While we were wondering whom the party was for, Jon came out, eyes twinkling and face flushed with excitement. I introduced him to Amy and told him it was her birthday. "It's my birthday, too!" he exclaimed, then blurted out, "How old are you?" When Amy told him that she was 39, he replied, laughing, "So am I!" On one level, that was probably close to the truth: Jon had energy and vitality unmatched in men half his age. He left behind more unfinished projects than most men even start in a lifetime.

Another song ends, and Amy shuts off



the iPod. I look up from the laptop and see our exit approaching. We haven't heard all of the album, and I consider turning it back on until we reach our hotel. I glance at the screen to see which song is next, and then unplug the iPod. "Your Hometown" is one of my favorite songs, but the last thing I want to hear about right now is "Main Street's whitewashed windows and vacant stores." Today, I want to see my hometown through the eyes of one of the greatest of its native sons, who, in the Prologue to *Rockford: An Illustrated History*, displayed an honesty and integrity lacking in far too many historians, amateur or professional:

> The book is in all respects a highly personal history whose approach is both qualitative and selective. I have left out some stories and included others for the simple reason that I liked some stories better than others, and I have depended on anecdotes to make my points because I think they are more apt to be remembered than simple facts. . . .
>
> Local history is always a mixed bag of fact and fantasy, including a number of things of questionable authenticity that we are reluctant to ignore. I have made every effort to corroborate the accuracy of the details in the following pages and have tried to be objective in recounting them; but I still believe the only real reason for writing a book such as this is that it's interesting, and whether entirely true or not, that it makes a good story.

It does, and he did. *Requiescat in pace*, Jon Lundin. c

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Letter From Serbia

by Andrea Crandall

Serbia in Our Own Image

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One week before last Christmas, the U.S. State Department fast-tracked four European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) projects in Serbia, which consisted of a loan to HVB Banka Serbia; an equity investment in Syntaxis Mezzanine Fund I; an equity investment in South Eastern Energy Capital; and a loan to Danube Group Holding of Serbia, which holds a stake in JKR Natural Resource B.V.

The State Department claims that these particular investments "will contribute to a stronger and more integrated economy in the Balkans." Therefore, Section 561 of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act (FOAA) was suspended. Section 561 would have prevented U.S. executive directors of the EBRD from voting in favor of these initiatives because of the Serbian government's noncompliance with the Hague Tribunal.

Why is the United States so eager to fund these projects?

The EBRD is effectively the same as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), or the International Finance Corporation (IFC). All are majority owned and controlled by the governments of five countries, of which the United States is the major player.

The reason for calling the EBRD "European" and not simply the "World Bank" is that the "European" title gives the organization a veneer of being "local" rather than a tool of foreign powers. In reality, all of these institutions are American. The U.S.-appointed leaders of the World Bank—and, by extension, its clones—include such luminaries as Larry Summers (who was recently embroiled in an fraud fiasco with the Harvard Institute for International Development) and Paul Wolfowitz.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is a tool for reshaping post-Soviet European countries in the image of Western Europe. The catchphrase is "restructuring, modernization and privatization." Practically speaking, that means selling public assets to international conglomerates with discount financing.

The pre-approved EBRD loan will subsidize HVB Banka Serbia, a private institution. HVB Banka Serbia is a subsidiary of Bank Austria Creditanstalt, the largest bank in Austria and a member of the fourth-largest bank in Europe, the UniCredit Group. UniCredit and Bank Austria Creditanstalt operate the most extensive international banking network in Central and Eastern Europe and recently entered into a partnership with the Bavarian HypoVereinesbank Group (HBV Group) to create the HVB Banka Serbia. Despite their colossal size and resources, the partnership receives expedited loans from a government-backed institution (the EBRD) for its Serbian venture. This tax-guaranteed conglomerate will teach the Serbs about private enterprise.

The EBRD will invest at least 25 million euros in a private equity fund called Syntaxis Mezzanine Fund I, which is a limited partnership based in Guernsey (a tax haven). The fund has four philanthropic objectives: building institutions; developing local fund managers; restructuring local companies; and finding new ways of financing companies. The Syntaxis fund managers say they can pursue these objectives while delivering "current income" to investors—which means they will pay dividends now. Giving money back is very odd for a young firm that is supposed to build infrastructure.

The EBRD will buy a ten-percent stake (60 million euros) in South Eastern Energy Capital (SENCAP), a private energy company. SENCAP is a partnership between the Public Power Corporation S.A. (the largest Greek power provider) and an American company, ContourGlobal, which is majority owned by the Wall Street investment firm Reservoir Capital Group.

Proceeds from the SENCAP investment will be used to acquire other energy resources in Serbia, as well as in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Rumania, and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. Loans guaranteed by Western governments will allow SENCAP to get a stranglehold on Eastern European electricity—in the EBRD's own words, they will establish a "new regional player" in the energy market. Would this be with an eye toward Russia?

Finally, there is the EBRD's 45-million-euro loan to JKR Natural Resource B.V. JKR is a private Dutch company specializing in developing roads and riverways. The EBRD loan will allow JKR to buy competitor companies in Serbia and consolidate the companies JKR already owns. Thus, the big picture emerges: NATO power-players are handing out tax-guaranteed loans to buddy companies in order to rebuild or buy up the Serbian infrastructure NATO destroyed. That's good business, if you can get it.

These four projects are steps toward a larger goal. Two crucial state-owned utilities are likely to be privatized soon: EPS (Elektroprivreda Srbije, Electric Power Industry of Serbia) and NIS (Naftna Industrija Srbije, Oil Industry of Serbia). Besides their potential as lucrative investments, these companies are vital to the Serbian economy—and crucial to controlling the country's politics.

Political control is necessary to fleece any state. And, unfortunately, Serbian politicians are aiding the predatory behavior of these international banks. The "Economy Privatization" Minister Predrag Bubalo parrots the IMF/World Bank's call for fast privatization, despite the disastrous effects this policy had in Russia. In the six months that politician Mladjan Dinkic was governor of Serbia's central bank, he paved the way to double the number of foreign-owned banks in Serbia. The bankruptcy law that Bubalo is using to speed the sale of state assets to foreigners was first brought to the Serbian parliament during Dinkic's governorship. (It was passed in July 2004.) This bankruptcy law was originally drafted by USAID and the World Bank.

When all is said and done, the international financiers will have their tentacles around energy, industry, and commerce in Eastern Europe. U.S. muscle will be used to enforce the new order, but the proceeds will be spread around banking houses in New York and Western Europe. Could the State Department have thought of a better holiday gift?

Andrea Crandall is an economist at Sanders Research Associates.

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Letter From Quebec

by Sean Scallon

Talking About Culture

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The Action Démocratique du Québec (ADQ) is a conservative party—at least by Quebec standards. It is led by 35-year-old political *wunderkind* Mario Dumont. In the recent elections for the National Assembly, the ADQ shattered Quebec's two-party system (the federalist and centrist Liberals and left-wing sovereigntist Parti Québécois), winning 31 percent of the vote (up from 18 percent in 2003) and gaining 41 seats (up from 5). The Liberals were reduced to 48 seats (from 72), and the PQ was utterly routed, being reduced to 36 seats (from 45) and garnering only 28 percent of the vote. Thus, the ADQ has formed Quebec's first minority government since 1878. More than that, the Liberals have basically been reduced to Anglophone Montreal and its surrounding suburbs, while the PQ maintained its traditional strongholds. The ADQ, however, won across the breadth of Quebec—rural, urban, and suburban.

M. Dumont won because he asked the questions that no one has had the courage to pose since Maurice Duplessis' old Union Nationale: What good is sovereignty when there is no culture to go with it? What good is independence when there are no people to enjoy liberty? As immigration to the province increased, the PQ sold out the Québécois by trying to compete with the Liberals for Montreal's immigrant vote while drifting further toward cultural Marxism. This wouldn't do for the ADQ. Indeed, one of the big issues during the campaign was the cultural impact of immigration—men banned from prenatal classes to avoid offending Muslim women; the removal of ham from traditional Québécois soup dishes; the windows at the YMCA frosted over to shield the eyes of pubescent Hasidic Jewish boys from the girls in step class; an isolated village council banning burkas, except on Halloween; Muslim cashiers at grocery stores refusing to touch items containing pork. (These problems are arising all over the United States as well.) That raises some questions: Who is supposed to conform to whom? And why should the dominant culture have to adjust itself to newcomers? Dumont echoed these sentiments on the campaign trail: "We can't defend the Québécois identity with mushy words that no one understands. We can't defend the Québécois identity with one knee on the ground."

If only American politicians (besides Tom Tancredo and Ron Paul) were so bold.

Several of the ADQ candidates landed in hot water for making controversial statements in the press that were quickly declared racist and xenophobic; the ADQ won nonetheless, because Dumont refused to let the conversation be bogged down by recriminations and skillfully kept the focus on the issues.

Dumont won by talking about culture, because the debate over sovereignty in Quebec lost its meaning and its relevance when it became a struggle over taxpayer spoils. If Tom Tancredo wishes to make an impact on next year's U.S. presidential campaign, he has to do more than just talk about immigration enforcement: He has to ask questions about immigration's impact on the culture at large—on the way we live our lives. (Granted, that may be easier to do in a more homogenous society such as Quebec.) For years, the struggle for Quebec's identity focused on language. However, French-speaking Muslim immigrants—or any sort of immigrant, for that matter—have a much more far-reaching impact on culture. As Conrad Yakabuski put it in the *Globe and Mail*,

> Mr. Dumont is no Jean-Marie Le Pen, despite being smeared as a xenophobe by his Liberal adversaries. Still, he told Quebeckers again and again during this campaign that they need not ask anyone's permission to show what it means to be Québécois. That they could assert their identity "without being afraid of passing for racists." That's the way it was in the old Quebec; that's the way it will be in the new Quebec. It's been a long time since any sovereigntist leader sounded as bold. Or as clear. It's not some arcane fiscal advantage that Mr. Dumont is talking about when he says he wants to entrench "our values, our identity" in a Quebec constitution. No Quebec election campaign has focused so viscerally on identity—on what it means to be Québécois—since the watershed 1976 vote that first brought René Lévesque and the sovereigntists to office. Like Mr. Lévesque, Mr. Dumont has shown he knows what Quebeckers are feeling in their guts. That is to a politician what the magic potion is to Astérix.

Dumont's autonomist position provided voters with a third way between the sovereigntists and the federalists. Most Québécois accept the fact they are a part of Canada and will not achieve total independence from her; but they wish to be left alone and not led around by the nose by Ottawa. Canadian Prime Minister Harper understands this because he and the Tory base in Alberta want the same thing. Together, Quebec and Alberta can provide a check on the power of Ontario, the Ottawa bureaucracy, and the moneyed elite of Toronto.

Sean Scallon is the author of Beating the Powers That Be.

Letter From Texas

by Wayne Allensworth

Well Into Spring, Even With Snow

◆

Old now is earth,
and none may count her days.
Earth may be fair,
and all men glad and wise.
Age after age, their tragic empires rise,
Built while they dream,
and in that dreaming weep . . .

—Old Hundred Twenty-Fourth

A white-haired pastor, a white church, a white field. The snow is falling, with the wind and the speed of the car creating the illusion of a blizzard on a spring day in Texas. Tomorrow will be Easter Sunday.

At first, we see only tiny, almost invisible snowflakes. Then, we turn off I-35, passing acres of pasture, mesquite trees, cacti, and the wildflowers that have flourished in the first wet spring in recent memory. We pass bright patches of reds and oranges, pinks and yellows, and the bright bluebonnets, especially striking against the deep green of the grass, then the stark whiteness of the accumulating snowfall. The brown and harsh ground has come to life again, and

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the flowers are pushing through the snow like the struggling arms of the survivors of some catastrophic shipwreck. Windmills dot the land along the fence lines, and longhorns trot through the snow and patches of grass. Will the cold snap kill the wildflowers?

We enter Somervell County. Ahead is Glen Rose and, looming to the northwest, the Comanche Peak nuclear power station—two reactors and a dome above the town and the rocky terrain. At the base of the Fossil Rim limestone formation are dinosaur tracks, traces of ancient creatures who roamed what was once the bottom of a shallow sea, a sea that retreated into what is now the Gulf of Mexico, leaving strange shapes in the rocks, ancient clams the locals call "deer hearts," and squid-like ammonites among them. Their fossilized remains dot the bed of the Paluxy River.

Who were the first men to come here? I've read that it was a strange and obscure race of hunters in the Ice Age, contemporaries of the mammoth, giant sloth, and the ancient bison. Some say they hunted the Staked Plains before the Red Man came, disappearing along with the mammoth as the ice sheets retreated north and the land grew hot, dry, and uninviting. The ice was gone, but the red men who followed thrived. They called themselves the People or the Human Beings. Some of them became horsemen and made this land their own, an especially dangerous outland for the Spaniards, Mexicans, and the Americans who came after. The only "Indians" remaining are on the high-school sports teams, some of them on the six-man football squads of small-town Texas.

Glen Rose passes, and the snow seems to fall faster. Ahead is Stephenville; to the south, Hico, Hamilton, and Pottsville.

I've read somewhere that rural areas provide a disproportionate amount of the Iraq fighting force—and of the casualties. This is a rich man's war and a poor man's fight, as my father used to say—but how many haven't been? At a café in Hico lined with pickup trucks and decked out in Lone Star flags, I see their faces. Their uniformed portraits hang on the paneled walls, their memory secured by bumper stickers: "Proud Parent of a U.S. Marine." The only emotion I feel, however, is a lingering sadness. Hico and Glen Rose, Hamilton and Pottsville, Zephyr and Erath County desperately need these young people.

The blanket of cold doesn't lift overnight, and Easter morning finds my son building a snowman in his grandparents' yard. He secures his personal connection to the mound of white by placing a fork in its "hand": Now, none can doubt that Matthew, who never misses an opportunity to heft a fork himself, is the snowman's creator. But it's Easter, and the snowman must fend for himself. We head for Pottsville and Trinity Lutheran Church.

The church in Pottsville is a white wooden structure, built by my wife's grandfather. A state historical marker stands outside, commemorating the founding of the community. There's a fair crowd for a small church, mostly old people, though sons and daughters and grandchildren help fill the pews—down from Dallas and Ft. Worth, up from Austin. The old men are still wearing their felt Stetsons in April; it's too cold for the straw.

The pastor's sermon is appropriately on the cycle of life and death, and our hope in the Resurrection we celebrate. The Epistle is from Corinthians; the Gospel, from Luke:

> Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre,
>
> Bringing the spices, which they had prepared . . .
>
> And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.
>
> And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.
>
> And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:
>
> And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them,
>
> Why seek ye the living among the dead? . . .
>
> And they returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest . . .
>
> Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

The altar is beautifully carved, Jesus reaching out to the congregation, calling us to Communion.

Afterward, the pastor is making his announcements, when the sun peeks through the arched windows of Trinity. You can feel the warmth and see the water dripping from the roof. The snow is melting. The sun, he says, like the bluebonnets showing outside, is reminding us that it is well into spring, even with snow.

Wayne Allensworth lives in Keller, Texas.

LIBERAL ARTS

A BLOOMIN' IDIOT WATCHES THE TIDE CRASH ON HIS HEAD

"It's as if we expect border control agents to do what a century of communism could not: defeat the natural market forces of supply and demand and defeat the natural human desire for freedom and opportunity. You might as well sit in your beach chair and tell the tide not to come in. . . .

"Although they broke the law by illegally crossing our borders or overstaying their visas, and our businesses broke the law by employing them our City's economy would be a shell of itself had they not, and it would collapse if they were deported. The same holds true for the nation.

"For our children to have a bright future, two things are true: a strong America needs a constant source of new immigrants. And in a post-9/11 world, a secure America needs to make sure that those immigrants arrive here legally. . . .

"As most members of the U.S. Senate recognize, we absolutely must have a Federal database that will allow employers to verify the status of all job applicants. But for this database to have any value, we must also ensure that the documentation job applicants present is incorruptible. That means we need to create a bio-metric employment card containing unique information—fingerprints or DNA, for instance.

"Every current job holder or applicant would be required to obtain a card, and every business would be required to check its validity against the Federal database. In theory, we already have such a card—it's called your Social Security card. But being a government product, naturally, its technology is way behind the times."

—from New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's testimony before the U.S. Senate (July 5, 2006)

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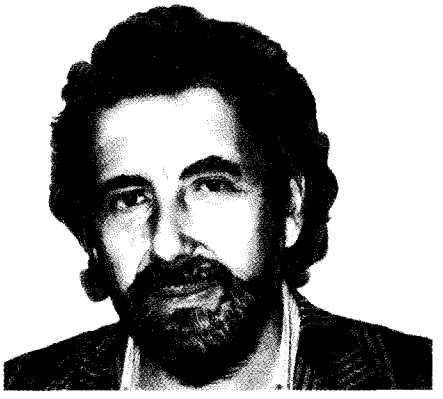
by Andrei Navrozov

Kierkegaard and the Camera



On a balmy spring day, a visitor to St. Mark's in Venice, if he is adventurous enough to make his way to the top of the cathedral and look down, will see the subjacent piazza covered in a species of vermin. Excoriating the global tourist is almost as banal a pastime as trailing through an Italian city in shorts and trainers behind a colored umbrella, and I scarcely wish to follow suit. I merely want to draw the reader's attention to the specific morphology of the creature, which bears an uncanny resemblance to an insect mentioned in the Apocalypse, the locust with a human head. This disinterested insight, part entomology and part eschatology, has led my Russian photographer friend Alexander Gusov to give the title *Locusts* to a vast portfolio of images devoted to the emergence of mass man in the nominally individualistic West.

Photography, as it happens, is the mobilizing impulse of the species under discussion. One can hardly imagine a locust swarm without at least one camera for each family subunit, and their progress through the world is a geometric series of voracious juxtapositions of landscapes, monuments, and backgrounds with their own likenesses, a kaleidoscopic process involving trillions of eventual permutations yet immovably focused on the self. Like a plague, their progress is expansionist and triumphal, arithmetically burgeoning on its advances, swelling with each pandemic success; like an infestation, it is vampiric and amoral, as unquestioning of its nature, its aims, and its ethics as any feeding beast's; like a sign of the times, it is revelatory in its finality, a chilling sensation which its tidal ubiquity, from Rome to Damascus and from Bath to Tibet, drives home with what can only be described as an apocalyptic force. The camera, far more than the airplane or the automobile, is the pale hobbyhorse astride which this nightmare rides in insensate triumph through individual consciousness.

Permit me a fanciful digression. There are English words, deeply rooted in our common Indo-European mentality, whose onomatopoeic intent seems almost wholly repulsive, notably the cluster beginning in *gn-*, such as *gnat* or its cognate *nit*—respectively, *gnus* and *gnida* in Russian, where the initial *g* is not silent. *Gnaw* is another, as is the Russian *gnoi*, "pus," and *gnash*, and *gnarly*. Now, it may well be that drawing the verb *to know*, along with the Greek root of *gno* as in *gnosis*, into this cluster is a folly of spurious semantics, but I am a writer, not an etymologist, and I can read words whichever way I like. Unlike the Marxist linguist Nikolai Marr, who had managed to derive the words of all the world's languages from the Russian for *rye* only to be exposed as a fraud by Stalin, I merit this small indulgence. It is not my fault that, in the exasperation of an Italian mother telling her child "*non fare lo gnorri*" ("don't act as if you know nothing about it"), I hear John Donne's bell tolling for all mankind. And it occurs to me that if one wishes to describe with any degree of clinical accuracy the millenarian pestilence that has come to gnaw on civilization, one must begin at the beginning.

The beginning is where the Bible, and Kierkegaard in our own waning Victorian day, found Original Sin in the Fall of man. Famously, the Danish philosopher compared the fear that Adam desires to conquer through wisdom with vertigo, noting that the lapse into sin invariably takes place in a kind of dizziness of promise—particularly the promise of liberty. Contrasted with that hallucinogenic abstraction is faith, which, to the contrary, is akin to clarity and is, unlike phantom knowledge, a real power. An etymologist, incidentally, might support Kierkegaard's view by pointing out that the English word *soul* originally meant "strength in the face of opposition," a sense retained today in its cognate, *resilience*. It was man's spirit, in other words, that proved unequal to the temptation of knowing.

Developing Kierkegaard's view, one can describe the forbidden fruit of Genesis as a sort of controlled substance, as man's first hallucinogenic drug, whose consumption in ever-increasing doses, as is the addict's lot, has been the main feature of man's progress to civilization since his expulsion from Eden. Wisdom, knowledge, understanding have served, like the mirages induced by certain narcotics, to rob him of the life force of faith he has been given as his main heredita-ment, leading him ever farther afield into a land of fantasy which he has long had no choice but to call reality. In Russian underworld argot, to introduce another point of semantics, heroin addicts speak of injecting the drug as *broadening* ("D'you broaden?"), while cocaine is known as *plan* ("Gives you a clear head"). So, too, is science a perpetual and unstoppable dilation, a worldview whose values obsolesce and pass like the effects of an addict's hits, its reason parasitically insatiable, its escalating demand for fresh injections of knowledge a telltale paragraph from a case study in addiction. If drug abuse is slavery, it is slavery that befalls those in search of freedom.

"He is, like, on speed all the time." Is there a more succinct way of introducing modern mass man? Come to think of it, is there a more accurate way of characterizing the workings of reason in a modern individual, of which Socrates is perhaps the first notable example? Does not the ineluctable sophistry of Plato's *Dialogues* have that essentially interminable quality of modern life, elastic like chewing gum on the one hand and hard as teacher's chalk on the other, which only the most wayward of pupils, after smoking a couple of joints, can savor with equanimity? Of course the joints, in this case, are the gnostic suppositions and epistemological contradistinctions, inventive metaphors and clever analogies, by which the philosopher broadens the argument in his obsession to expand his domain of thought and thereby to assert his own immanence in the soulless world he regards as real.

To be fair, like Nietzsche after him, Kierkegaard spares Socrates the kind of ridicule he heaps on every philosopher from Aristotle to Hegel, but now is not the time to be consistent. It takes no more than ordinary human courage to drink the hemlock, while the challenge to with-

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stand temptation by immortality has been known to defeat titans, to say nothing of Adam in Eden. As the Russian writer Lev Shestov, one of the first to appreciate Kierkegaard, noted nearly a century ago, partaking of the fruit of knowledge

> has made man lose even the ability to see his newfound impotence as a misfortune. He has become a knight of resignation, equating knowledge with truth. He has lost his freedom, yet he is quite unperturbed by it.

In other words, what Marx has famously called the opium of the people is not religion but Marx himself, Marx and all his predecessors in speculation starting with the eminently sympathetic Socrates. The opiate of the people is human reason.

And so it came to pass that, as the visitor to *Animal Farm* "looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again," in the concluding sentence of Orwell's prescient satire, "it was impossible to say which was which." Clearly, the apocalyptic morphology of the freedom-loving swine fascinated the English writer, much as the tourist's mutation to locust fascinates my Russian photographer friend. A swine is a warm-blooded quadruped, however, with a distinctive symbolism that belongs to a kinder, gentler epoch, one in which the creatures of Manor Farm had given names and identifiable characters before their lapse into revolution. Not so with the world that has passed these ultimate decades in narcotic stupefaction, reminiscent of the scene in the film where Al Pacino, in the role of amateur drug dealer, leaps face-first into a heap of coke like a hog diving into the feeding trough. Which of man's recent triumphs of reason, I wonder, does that heap represent? The neutron bomb? The White House at night? Russian democracy under President Putin? The nanotechnology superweapon being developed by friendly China?

Speculative philosophy and its many offspring, from political economy to quantum physics, share Adam's desire to understand by generalizing and to see by expanding. They want to broaden the mind, to come up with a plan of action without which one's head spins and all is fear, confusion, chance, and God. But no sooner is the needle in the forearm, no sooner is the formula on the blackboard and the people have heard over the wireless that something rational has just taken place in Munich, in Yalta, or in Washington, as everything becomes clear again, at least until it transpires that Hitler's a villain, Joe Stalin is nobody's uncle, and FDR had known that the Japs would attack Pearl Harbor, at which point a new injection of truth becomes necessary. The sole constant objective, meanwhile, is to keep on going, to go on broadening and planning, and to continue being revolutionary, like hamsters on a wheel, in search of the universal truth that sets man free.

"Man lacks the courage to think in categories by which he lives," wrote Shestov, "and is reduced to living by categories in which he thinks." Where the Apostolic Church, with Her methadone of occasionally imperfect faith, once had the task of mediation, as a kind of drug rehabilitation center, between man and the universe, in modern times it is Art, or even more absurdly Culture, that would encourage him to face reality. Yet, dipping into semantics once more, one finds that the meaning of art, extant in English in the word *artful*, is "trickery" or "illusion," whereas in Russian, the word means "temptation." *Khudozhnik*, Russian for "artist," is even more frank, literally meaning "evildoer" or "malfeasant." The tribesmen that until recently resisted the Europeans' attempts to photograph them, like the primitive Saxons or Slavs who blackened the magic of art in their own day, had a fair sense of what progress is all about. Indeed, a believing Christian can easily argue that much in the evolution of Western aesthetics since at least the Renaissance has turned on deception and enfeeblement of the soul.

As for the modern mass man's penchant for culture, it is a matter of indifference to the locusts swarming St. Mark's Square whether the "bellini" at Florian are made with the real juice of white peaches, now out of season, or with the bottled simulacrum manufactured under the label of Cipriani. Nor is the fact that Bellini the painter and Cipriani the publican have nothing in common except fame, as a sports car and a lollipop may have nothing in common besides the color, detectable to their lens-like insect eyes, which perceive no reality apart from the reassuring heartbeat of individual immanence and the empowering conformism of collective ratiocination. What sort of language is it that has only *I* and *we* for pronouns? Whose verbs have only one tense, the future, and only one mood, the complacent indicative? Where the distinctions between *man* and *pig*, the White House and the Kremlin, right and wrong, are less significant than those between the yen and the euro?

What sort of culture is it that speaks such a language, and what salutary effect can its mediation possibly have on the ever more swift fall of man? I laugh from bitter experience, for I was born into a culture that overtly embraced the ethical positions covertly, unconsciously, or chaotically espoused by the materialist culture of the West today. Was not my Moscow of half a century ago the world capital of philosophical positivism? Her optimistic people were like insect soldiers, locusts moving in serried ranks, worker ants marching toward a luminous future, hoplites rubbing forelegs against shields with a deafening noise that drowned out the doubt of individual conscience. And here I stand, in St. Mark's in Venice, in Piazza di Spagna in Rome, in Trafalgar Square in London, and see the same glassy eyes, which have now gone digital, still focused on a collective appraisal of a collective existence.

There, one is photographing his wife against the great winged lion. It is famous, that lion, which means it has immanence to spare. Hence truth—or wisdom, or knowledge, or culture—must belong to it, appertain to it, saturate its exterior like an invisible yet potent elixir, envelop it like biblical manna or cleave to it like greensward to the Apennine hillside. His wife belongs to him, after all, and, by making her a part of this gnomic marvel, he can sink his jaws into the very heart of the matter. *Snap!* His wife now exists, resplendent in a baseball cap and Adidas, and he has a picture of her to prove it, inside the little machine of whose workings he knows so much less than a prelapsarian Adam knew of shrubs and trees.

Snap! goes the gnathic shutter. Wow, that was a great one, honey. He is nobody's fool, not him. Not one of those stupid morons who'd lived under communism for all that time, in Russia or wherever, until it went bankrupt and they started to live like us human beings again. Or one of those ignorant people in the Dark Ages, who only went to church and had all that garbage drummed into their heads from morning to night. Back home, he's got television, of course, but once in a while, it's good to get out. The fact is, he quite likes going places. Seeing things. Broadening the mind. And that's the name of the game these days, though he did once hear some curmudgeonly foreign fellow say that if you broaden it too much, your brains will fall right out. Quite a joker, that Danish fellow. C

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by Srdja Trifkovic

Balkan Blowback

On May 1, at a hearing on the future of Kosovo, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Democrat Tom Lantos of California, made a truly remarkable statement:

> Just a reminder to the predominantly Muslim-led governments in this world that here is yet another example that the United States leads the way for the creation of a predominantly Muslim country in the very heart of Europe. This should be noted by both responsible leaders of Islamic governments, such as Indonesia, and also by jihadists of all color and hue. The United States' principles are universal, and in this instance, the United States stands foursquare for the creation of an overwhelmingly Muslim country in the very heart of Europe.

"Yet another example" means that, before Kosovo, we created Bosnia—and America is paying the price on both accounts. Mr. Lantos' jihadist friends are, indeed, taking note and expressing their gratitude in predictable ways.

On May 8, four Albanian Muslims from Kosovo, one Turk, and one Jordanian were arrested for conspiring to attack Fort Dix in New Jersey with AK-47s and "to kill as many soldiers as possible," according to the U.S. attorney's office.

It was not easy to discern their identity from media reports, however. The word *Albanian* was nowhere to be found. "Four of them were born in the former Yugoslavia," reported the *New York Times*. "One of the suspects was born in Turkey and four in the former Yugoslavia," the AP confirmed. And that's how the story was reported in the key early hours, when the angle and frame of an event's public perception are determined.

The names of those four "Yugoslavs" were eminently non-Slavic: Dritan, Eljvir, and Shain Duka (three brothers, all of them here illegally), and Agron Abdullahu. Those are Albanian names, of course, but not one in a hundred Americans knows that. In fact, grasping that they are Albanians and knowing that "ethnic Albanian" plus "Muslim from the former Yugoslavia" equals "Kosovo" is the privilege of experts. It is but one of many Balkan equations that mainstream-media editors are determined to keep hidden from their consumers. Furthermore, the fact that there was nothing in the federal complaint about the four suspects' ethnic origins was almost certainly the result of political interference.

The urge to conceal the identity of Fort Dix plotters has the same roots as Mr. Lantos' appeal to jihadists to take note of our benevolence. The plotters are in the United States because of Washington's support for the Balkan Muslims, and that support is continuing because—by now—the creators of the Balkan debacles of the 1990's are afraid of them and hope to appease them. It was subsequently revealed that Mr. Abdullahu was a "KLA sniper." This piquant little detail further illustrates the idiocy and wickedness of those who still believe that they can forge a partnership with "jihadists of all color and hue," or use them to achieve some other, unrelated objectives. As we have seen over the past decade and a half, to continue encouraging the Muslim sense of victimhood embodied in the myth of the "genocide in Srebrenica" or "Kosova" is to feed would-be G.I. killers with a political pap that nourishes their hate. If the "War on Terror" is to accomplish something good, that idiocy must stop. Pandering to Islam's geopolitical designs—in the Balkans or anywhere else—and sacrificing Christians in the process is not only bad but counterproductive.

Yet White House spokesman Tony Snow hastened to assure us that there is "no direct evidence" that the men arrested in the Fort Dix plot have ties to international terrorism. His message is clear: The Bush administration knows it cannot keep the Albanian identity of four "Yugoslav" suspects concealed forever, but it wants to preempt any suspicion that an independent "Kosova" would be a black hole of jihadist terrorism in the heart of Europe. Of course, a victim of Islamic terrorism does not care whether the attack is orchestrated from Bora Bora or the result of Sudden *Jihad* Syndrome, but hastily denying the "Yugoslavs'" link to Al Qaeda and other global networks is a political maneuver for the proponents of Kosovo's independence that necessarily turns a blind eye to reality.

Having been assured *ad nauseam* over the years that Kosovo's Albanians are not really serious about their Islam—that, even when they desecrate Christian churches and joyously rip crosses from church domes, they do it for "nationalist" rather than jihadist reasons—the powers that be are doing their utmost to ensure that the public remains anesthetized. Asking when and how Albanian "secularists" became Islamic radicals is a no-no. Being so audacious as to wonder what this transformation bodes for a new, independent Muslim state in the heart of Europe is simply not on. Asking questions about major KLA figures' documented links to terrorism (including ties to Osama bin Laden) is *verboten*. In the meantime, cadres, cash, and ordnance linked to jihadist outrages all over Europe have been traced back to Kosovo, including the bombings in Madrid (March 2004) and London (July 2005), and a rocket attack on the U.S. embassy in Athens last year.

Exactly the same pattern of mendacity and denial on the part of U.S. officialdom was evident last February, after the shooting spree by a 19-year old Bosnian Muslim, Sulejman Talovic, left five people dead and four wounded in a Salt Lake City shopping mall. Five months later, the authorities still claim to be clueless about his motives. From what we now know about the case, however, it appears that the rampage in Utah was yet another "lone wolf" attack by a Muslim-as-Muslim—in other words, yet another outbreak of the deadly Sudden *Jihad* Syndrome that is erupting across America with increasing regularity.

Not surprisingly, Talovic's family and a "shocked" Bosnian Muslim communi-

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ty were quick to reject any possibility of a jihadist connection. "We are Muslims, but we are not terrorists," the killer's aunt, Ajka Omerovic, told the media. She rejected out of hand any religious motive for the shooting and claimed the family "can't explain it"; but this may not have been the first case of SJS in the family: Amir Omerovic, apparently Talovic's cousin, threatened to spread anthrax in 2002. Omerovic admitted sending letters to the offices of Gov. John G. Rowland, the U.S. Coast Guard and Marines in Connecticut, and the Judicial Review Council in Hartford. "This is only the beginning," Omerovic's letters said. "Americans will die. Death to America and Israel."

Talovic's Bosnian-born girlfriend, who lives in Texas, and who knew him only through daily hours-long telephone conversations, says that his favorite film was *Malcolm X*—the same movie that set John Walker Lindh on the path to *jihad*. Contrary to the family's assurances, she also revealed that he had a contact at the local mosque, a man he met while attending services there. The mosque in question is just two blocks from the scene of the carnage. It is the same mosque attended by U.S. Marine Corporal Wassef Ali Hassoun, the deserter now safely back in his native Lebanon.

On the eve of his attack, Talovic told his girlfriend that something was going to happen the following day, an event that she might find unforgivable; yet he added that it was going to be "the happiest day of his life," and that "it could only happen once in a lifetime." The statement seems mysterious, and, if pondered outside the framework of Islamic imagery, it would be indicative of mental instability. If we assume that Talovic was motivated by *jihad*, however, the meaning of "the happiest day" that could "only happen once" becomes clear. The Koran vouches that "those who are slain in the path of Allah" are not dead (3:169); they are granted immediate entry to paradise, "to rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah." This assurance is elaborated in Islamic tradition, and it is reiterated by countless orthodox Islamic sources. Furthermore, Talovic took a shower before going to the mall with the intention of killing and being killed: He was practicing *tahara*, the ritual Islamic washing before battle.

A particularly intriguing revelation by Talovic's girlfriend concerns a vision that he told her he had experienced while still in Bosnia: One evening, he heard a horse outside of his family's home. He walked out, and standing before him was a white horse "with two beautiful eyes." He alerted his aunt, but she could not see the animal. The incident nevertheless made young Talovic "very, very happy." To understand the meaning of this episode, and the reasons for the killer's happiness, we need to turn to the Islamic Imagery Project compiled by West Point's Combating Terrorism Center:

> The white horse is inextricably tied to conceptions of the prophet, martyrdom, and paradise (heaven). It is most often associated with . . . Muhammad's *miraj* or night journey to heaven, when the Prophet ascended to heaven on the back of a white horse. In this regard, the white horse most specifically evokes notions of the afterlife and the heavenly paradise awaiting pious Muslims (or jihadi martyrs) upon their death . . . [I]n both Sunni and Shiite traditions, the white horse is strongly associated with martyrdom and the expectation of heavenly paradise. . . .
>
> [T]he white horse evokes the righteousness of these individuals' martyrdom, and reminds the audience that these men have been granted the martyr's promised reward of ascension to heavenly paradise.

If it walks like a jihadi, and kills like a jihadi . . . and yet the media refuse to connect the dots from New Jersey to Utah to the Balkans, and the authorities claim that there are no dots to be connected anyway. We've seen it all before, of course. As I noted in these pages almost two years ago, the pattern is almost boringly predictable: A Muslim commits an act of violence, or is caught plotting to commit one. The local Muslim community responds with a mix of indignation and denial—the Albanians did so less than a day after the Fort Dix case blew up—even as non-Muslim civic leaders are reassuring the Muslim community that it is loved and appreciated and are calling on their fellow citizens to be warm and supportive of their Muslim neighbors. The media report heartwarming stories of the Muslims' sense of rejection and alienation, or dwell on the perpetrator's history of woe—in Talovic's case, by blaming the bloodthirsty Serbs for his childhood traumas.

To understand the incidence of sudden acts of random extreme violence by Balkan Muslims against Americans, it is necessary to unmask the web of lies and distortions that has guided U.S. policy in the Balkans for years.

In the aftermath of the Fort Dix conspiracy, the first step should be to demand answers to some specific questions: Why and how were Muslim Albanian terrorists from Kosovo able to plan an operation here on our soil? What are they doing here? Didn't the U.S. military fight the Serbs for 78 days in 1999 so that they could have their ethnically clean, *Serbenfrei* statelet? As James G. Jatras, president of the American Council for Kosovo, points out,

> For almost a decade the U.S. government (or more precisely a handful of State Department bureaucrats and a few Congressmen) have placed the U.S. firmly on the side of the KLA and have helped create a haven for their operations. Even worse, KLA supporters in the United States have operated with virtual impunity, collecting money and weapons to support KLA operations not only in Kosovo, but in neighboring areas of southern Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and northern Greece.

He reminds us that, in 2004, Dutch television broadcast a documentary of Kosovo Albanian Muslims legally buying weapons in the United States and shipping them to Kosovo in support of their "liberation war"—violating numerous U.S. laws, including the Neutrality Act. The documentary then showed the same Albanians at a fundraiser in New York City writing hefty checks to American politicians of both parties—and, three years later, there is no public indication that any action was taken by federal or state law-enforcement agencies.

It cannot be otherwise—as long as Kosovo Albanians continue controlling the global heroin trade and we continue having the best Congress money can buy. c

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CONSERVATISM

The Enigmatic Professor Strauss, Part I

by Claude Polin

One can safely claim that Leo Strauss was an enigmatic man, since he prided himself on being enigmatic. He raised the art of double-talk to the dignity of a requisite for any serious philosophizing: For him, it took stupidity or insignificance for a (self-proclaimed) philosopher to be able to afford to write or speak in a clear, straightforward way; a true philosophical truth, he believed, is a hidden truth. Whatever the reason for this rather quixotic postulation, it has one merit: It warns us never to take Strauss's words at face value. Understanding him amounts to understanding not what he says, but what he doesn't say—not his words, but what he hides behind his words. Since obfuscation is of the essence, debunking is as well. The exercise would seem futile (after all, if he doesn't want to be understood, why not leave him alone?) but for the fact that, in the highest places of American society, Strauss's name seems to be an open sesame for power and influence. Strauss wrote with a purpose, but he obviously meant to address only a chosen audience able to read between the lines.

It could be argued that something at least is quite clear as well as provocative: Strauss is no friend to what he calls modernity; he seems to side clearly with the conservatives, fleeing modernity so far that only with classical Greek philosophy does he find his real bearings. I don't deny his bearing a grudge; the question is, What, exactly, does he bear a grudge against?

Strauss bases his diagnosis on the principle that ideas move the world, at least the human world. I couldn't agree more with the implicit denial of the Marxist creed. Men are indeed always governed by their own conceptions, and philosophers are but men whose special competence is to translate these conceptions into words. Strauss is perfectly justified in thinking that philosophical systems lie, however unconsciously, at the base of all societies. And even more justified because, for him, not all of these ideas are equally valid, for they come under only two headings: the ones underlying barbaric societies and the ones that give birth to civilized societies—the latter being the only ones which must be defended. Such were the ideas prominent in the classical Western world, and such are the ideas Strauss intends to revive, because, according to him, they are threatened with death.

At least that is the way the Straussian symphony begins, promising bliss to classical conservative ears. But the classical conservative should hear out the words before succumbing to the melody. If he does, he might begin to think that Strauss has invented a new kind of conservatism.

To start with, it's difficult not to mention how exasperatingly convoluted his way of dealing with the doctrines is. The reader soon understands that Strauss doesn't care too much about what the philosophers actually say or try to say (he never quotes them precisely anyway); he is only concerned with using them to state something without appearing to do it on his own.

Whatever his reasons, the method borders from time to time on plain unfairness. One could, for instance, argue (I did it some 30 years ago) that Burke's conception of history amounts to equating the present with the good, which is a rather revolutionary idea; but to have Burke say that "the state must pursue the greatest variety of ends and must be concerned with individuality" makes him a vague forerunner of Friedrich Hayek, which is, I believe, downright preposterous.

On top of that, one very often remains in doubt about what exact ideas Strauss uses the philosophers to defend or criticize. For instance, he is very critical of Machiavelli, but the reader ends up being taught that Machiavelli's main discovery is that "what is most powerful in most men most of the time is not reason, but passion"—which is fine, but hardly closes the case. If he means Machiavelli is a realist, so what? In the same vein, to learn that Locke is obsessed with allowing the accumulation of capital to take place, and therefore ends up advocating "a life that is a joyless quest for joy," is hardly devastating. Or again, to be made aware of Hobbes' limited validity, because he is confronted with the fact that, in many cases, the fear of death proves to be a weaker force for uniting men than the fear of Hell or the fear of God, only makes Hobbes impractical, but not necessarily a barbarian.

That much had to be said before mentioning the obvious: Strauss has a doctrine of his own. But the reader has to be very wary of being submerged by the morass of his particular comments and digressions and must learn to pick up one word here and another word there. Or one could say he has to behave like people who eat artichokes: They have to peel off layer after layer of leaves to get to the heart of the vegetable. A classical conservative must agree with nine tenths of what Strauss says against Machiavelli, Locke, or any of the other supporters of modernity. But then, I'm sure a nagging doubt will remain with him about what Strauss is up to—and he will start peeling.

For Strauss, modernity may be summed up in one word: *relativism*. Modernity coincides with the withering away of objective standards of human behavior, which he occasionally also calls eternal or universal, and, eventually, with the radical criticism that there are such things at all. (Sometimes, he seems to refer to ideas in Plato's sense—which is natural, since Strauss claims to be Plato's disciple—and sometimes, he disowns them as ridiculous notions.) His indictment of the modern world rests on the notion that modern man does not rely, to conduct his life or his thoughts, on anything but himself—*i.e.*, his subjective opinions, his passions, his interests. Modernity is the brainchild of Machiavelli, the first philosopher to consider moral rules vain and without any natural foundations, the founding father of societies devoid of any unifying moral principle, built up using men's passions, from fear to greed. (As everybody knows, there is no effective prophet for Machiavelli except the armed one.)

No classical conservative can support relativism, but what exactly are Strauss's reasons for opposing it? All in all, I think they all point to the same idea, which Strauss expresses in his usual semi-hidden way: Moral or philosophical relativism is

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a threat to man's nature. But that only means the reader is left with the question: What, for Strauss, is man's nature?

It seems that threat has, for Strauss, developed to its full lethality in two distinct stages, or behind two different masks.

First, says Strauss, modernity took the guise of what he calls *political hedonism*. (Here and following, all words in italics are Strauss's.) Hedonism was born with Epicurus: What is good for a man cannot be what requires any sacrifice on his part; it is what is pleasant for him. But while this principle led Epicurus to retreat from society, with modern philosophy, it becomes the founding principle of society itself. Each of them, though on his own terms, claims the same thing: Every man is supposed to have a natural right to what is most pleasant for him—first of all, his life; then, all the commodities of living. Therefore a man enters society for only two reasons: to have his life more securely protected and to enjoy more pleasures. Consequently, governments are supposed to "furnish the citizens abundantly with all good things that are conducive to delectation." There is no moral law; the only legitimate rules are those conducive to the safe enjoyment of one's life. It is nigh impossible not to recognize in these features, however sketchily outlined, the very features of our modern consumer societies. But now, the question is: What's wrong with enjoying life and being dedicated to a society that hails the pursuit of happiness?

The classical conservative library provides endless rows of written evidence against these seductive dreams. The gist of their common teachings is that no man can possibly be a world unto himself, unless he is God (which means he has taken leave of his senses and reality, as all madmen do) or he is a beast (which means he has taken leave of his human nature). And that is why men, by nature, are not only sociable but religious animals (a religion is what relates people), whether they acknowledge it or not. But men who confuse what's good for them according to their nature with what is pleasant to their senses are precisely beings unable to relate to anything outside themselves: Each individual becomes the measure of everything, his personal pleasure being the only legitimate law he has to obey. This attitude has been known ever since the Fall: It consists, theologically speaking, in man's loving himself to the point of preferring himself to God, or revolting against Him, and, philosophically speaking, considering himself as an achieved, perfect being who has nothing to do but be what he is. It is the Original Sin, that of pride, the reverse of humility or knowledge of man's true nature, of the distance between his immediate self and the perfection of his nature, and of his duty to achieve it within himself.

Now, is this classical evidence against hedonism Strauss's own? Hardly so. At first, Strauss presents a vague series of half-hearted criticisms, such as the relative ineffectiveness of the fear of death to ensure social peace, or the boredom of Lockean life. It takes time to realize that his actual criticism consists in assimilating hedonism with a *lowering of the standards* for a man's life; hedonism is said to *debase* man, to *degrade* him, to lead him to lead a life that is not *honorable* or *noble*. A man endlessly indulging his pleasures or whims is not so much a renegade as he is, purely and simply, a *pig*. In other words, he does not commit sin, he is not disobedient, he is not inflated with pride; he behaves like a drunkard who just stumbles into the gutter.

Such a criticism would be absolutely clear if one were provided with at least one example of those standards. This, Strauss doesn't do, at least not in the same book: One is left wondering what that man is whose dignity is infringed by his equating the good with the pleasant. Then, Strauss suddenly confronts us with this implicit evidence: This argument is, quite simply, the opposite of the classical one. Hedonism does not result from a surge of *pride* on man's part that allows him to take his own pleasure as the measure of all other things, but from man's shying away from his own dignity, *stooping* to indulge in a way of life unworthy of his stature. A hedonist is not a man who doesn't respect God; he is a man who doesn't respect man. Instead of a classical tenet of a classical conservative attitude, one is left with so many questions (for instance, how can man measure himself against himself?) that it's simpler to stick to this one: What does Strauss mean to say without saying it?

At first, Strauss's second indictment of modernity doesn't help much to answer this question. For him, hedonism is only the first stage of relativism, of modernity. As hedonism develops, says Strauss, it forces relativism to assume a new guise, which he calls *historicism*. The term seems to have three meanings for him.

The first is what one could call harmless: The philosopher must not only look for true principles but consider his particular historical situation and use sagacity to put them into practice.

The second is exemplified by modern philosophers of history. It states that the truth slowly unveils itself so that only its latter-day lovers are lucky enough to become really wise. There is, for Strauss, a dark side to this historicism (for which he seems to hold Burke, the first historical philosopher, responsible), and this is the potential sanctification of the present moment, which results from the sanctification of the past ones. Prescription is, indeed, a well-known theme in Burke. But if this is the case, isn't historicism just another facet of relativism? And then, why exactly is this relativism any worse than that displayed by its hedonistic twin? One may say that historicist relativism is just individual hedonistic relativism on a public scale. It may then be argued that, while the former may, in practice, be more painful to the dissenter than the latter, they are both rather indistinguishable on a purely conceptual level.

So obviously, for Strauss, there is something sinister lurking in this mutability of standards that is still to blossom into its full lethalness. I think Strauss's reasoning is as follows.

While original historicism, such as Burke's or Hegel's, does maintain that what is considered truth varies from one era to another, it never claims that the relativity of their truths is apparent to men who believe in them. At its worst, historicism, claims Strauss, appears when this relativity becomes fully conscious, at least to some: This is what he calls the *absolute moment*—not the moment when the truth of the whole history appears, but when, suddenly, nothing appears to be true or false, good or bad, right or wrong. History suddenly appears as an ever-changing flow of ephemeral notions, and, therefore, the consciousness of history culminates in a *nihilistic* consciousness. This is Strauss's ultimate indictment of modernity, and it surely seems to be quite consonant with classical conservatism.

Nihilism, however, may be considered bad on two entirely different grounds. One is religious. Logically enough, Nietzsche, the nihilist, is an atheist: God must be dead for men to create their own values; nihilism is the barren moral field on which men must plant, since nothing grows naturally on it. Whoever wants to prosecute nihilism must first prosecute atheism; whoever disapproves of nihil-

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ism must be a religious man.

For Strauss, there is no more fundamental philosophical choice than the one between Reason and Revelation, between a life of manly *intellectual autonomy* and a life of *loving obedience* to God. But Strauss makes his choice plain: The true philosopher knows of no other authority than that of *unassisted human reason*. So he is bent on proving that nihilism is wrong on purely human grounds. It is not true, says he, that man does not bear in the depth of his nature some objective norm of behavior, some universal law whose origin is neither the mere will of some men nor the whims of many, which no man can break without feeling some inner guilt, not out of any fear of a formidable God, nor out of love for a paternal God, but simply because it is part of man inasmuch as he is a man.

Hence, the precise definition of what Strauss is after to offset historical relativism and pronounce it absolutely evil: a norm that is indisputable but owes nothing of its authority to the nonhuman status of its author; in other words, a norm that is purely human—accessible to unassisted human reason—but endowed with the dignity of a divine law.

Strauss is not about to give a cut-and-dried definition of this law, but a careful confrontation of several disseminated texts uncovers a very simple idea. Hedonistic relativism was offensive to human dignity but, to a certain extent, livable: The hedonist cares nothing for his fellow men but does not demand that they enjoy what he enjoys; he is no angel, but no demon either; he mostly wants to be left alone. Standard historical relativism observes the revolutions of the moral sphere and is the probable cause of a moral skepticism, which is bad but still livable, or of a moral positivism, which is dangerous (one subscribes to what is) but conducive to moral cowardice rather than aggressive dogmatism. Nihilistic relativism is something else: Men have become fully conscious that all principles are equally valid, because they are all equally invalid (or the reverse); more precisely, they have become conscious that there is no rational way to decide among moral principles, but only personal choice and dedication to this choice. In other words, nihilism obtains when sheer will has once and for all superseded understanding: That which is claimed to be a valid standard of life is but that which is willed to be such. Eventually, since validity is synonymous with power (to enforce this validity), and since there is no reason for a man to set another man's values over his own, nihilism culminates in terrorism, whether it be that of Rousseau's General Will, Nietzsche's Will to Power, or the will of a political gang striving for domination.

In a nutshell, nihilism is evil because it is *fanatical obscurantism*, radical dogmatism, intolerance (such as that displayed by most religious men). Nihilism is bad because it consists in man not respecting man.

At this point, the classical conservative is taken aback: The criticism of relativism, which started as a defense of an objective norm, ends up as a defense of the absence of an objective norm that could be imposed on all men. Strauss, though, seems utterly unaware of any contradiction in his thinking and steadfastly opposes anything that smacks of relativism: Max Weber is an inadvertent precursor to Hitler (there is no rational way to prove the superiority of any one value to any other), and Rousseau's sovereign General Will would be perfectly entitled to legitimate cannibalism. In other words, Strauss preaches intolerant tolerance, or tolerant intolerance. So what's the catch?

The catch, I think, consists in some such idea: Just because some ignoble men avail themselves of a self-proclaimed mission to spread a spurious truth does not mean that one must throw the baby out with the bath water. One must rest assured that there actually are noble men, quintessential men who embody the essential nature of man, and who therefore are the natural bearers of standards for human life, men who deserve to assume the role of natural leaders of mankind. In other words, there must be truth, but not the so-called truths based on a revelation that some unscrupulous men can too easily claim to have been privileged with: Instead, truths are universal because they partake of a human nature knowable to a human reason, and the very purpose of this reason, and its noblest one, is to understand what a man is.

Hence, the glory of Socrates, who, says Strauss, was the first true philosopher, because he decided to set aside the study of nature to concentrate on the study of man, and who was, at the same time, the first to understand that philosophy is primarily political philosophy. Hence, Strauss's pretence to find in classical Greek philosophers, the heirs of Socrates, the solution to his personal riddle.

Strauss's main interest lies with Plato and Aristotle, marginally with Thucydides, and it is noticeable that he pays only lip service to the Stoics. Following his habit, he proceeds to make them say what he wants them to say, mixing their thinking in his personal blender and extracting from the result four main teachings.

The first one, and a crucial one, is that there is a nature of human things, which means, on the one hand, that they are not necessarily what custom wants them to be (philosophy is a revolt against tradition), and, on the other, that what man is or is supposed to be, whether individually or collectively, cannot be determined by mutual agreement, by convention. (Philosophy is the discovery of what is, whether men like it or not, *versus* the framing of an artificial reality for the purpose of achieving convenience or pleasure.) But classical philosophy teaches not only what nature is not, but also what nature is. For Strauss, the Greek philosophers agreed on one issue: The wise man is the man whose life is devoted to contemplation, defined as the understanding of the fundamental laws that make human life livable. However, while Strauss repeatedly praises wisdom as devotion to contemplation, he is obviously reluctant to grant Plato's intelligible world any serious status. (At some point, he even flatly speaks of "the decayed Platonism which is underlying the notion of timeless values.") He would rather have wisdom as the Aristotelean virtue of prudence—that is to say, as the know-how necessary to apply ideas to a changeable and often reluctant reality. But he is not too keen on defining precisely which ideas should be applied. (Never does Strauss mention the belief in a cosmos.) It becomes increasingly evident that this know-how is so utterly the exclusive privilege of certain men, the philosophers, that it becomes less the understanding of an objective reality than the possession of an inner truth of which only *they* are the natural bearers; less of an essentially communicable truth of which all men partake—be it very unequally, and even minimally—than an essentially esoteric knowledge that should not be revealed to all and, in any case, can neither be possessed nor, still less, understood by all. Philosophy is the endless quest for the truth that some men pursue throughout their lives, which means that, eventually, it coincides with what the philosophers do or say.

The first teaching implicitly leads to the second. What is remarkable about the Greeks, says Strauss, is their unfalter-

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ing certitude of the inequality of men in regard to human perfection. According to him, classical philosophers contended that some men are by nature superior to others and, therefore, "according to natural right, the rulers of others." Strauss's Aristotle agrees with Strauss's Plato: There are some men who are, by nature, fit to be wise, and multitudes who are, by nature, doomed to be unwise; there is no deeper, nor more eternal difference between men than that between *fools*, on one hand, and *philosophers* and *gentlemen*, on the other. (These gentlemen are men who lack active wisdom but are "habitually sympathetic to philosophy.") The pessimism of the Greek philosophers, says Strauss, is perfectly justified; it is in the nature of things. It has nothing to do with education, for no teacher does much more than water the seeds of wisdom lying dormant in his pupils' minds, as Socrates always maintained. There are men capable of knowledge, and these "men are a small minority, men who possess certain gifts that most men lack, the few who possess a certain nature." In other words, there are forever three cities within every city, and, says Strauss, the city of wants is that of *pigs* who will never be interested in, or friendly to, those who dwell in the *city of the armed camp*, and still less those who inhabit the *city of beauty* and are the lovers of wisdom.

Unfortunately, the three cities are parts of every city, and all citizens must live together. But "the few cannot rule the many unwise by force," and "the ability of the wise to persuade the unwise is extremely limited": Thus arises the political problem that consists in "reconciling the requirements for wisdom with the requirements for consent." There is even "a natural right to unwisdom." There is no question that, under these circumstances, no perfect society has existed, or ever will; one can only hope for the least bad. Hence, the Straussian classical philosopher's third lesson. It is not so much that the best regime is the famous mixed one. It is that the wise have to learn the know-how to govern the masses, the ways to make them do what they not only wouldn't do but would be loath to do by themselves. Here, Strauss's Plato takes the lead from Aristotle, and, though he seems to teach the reverse, actually demonstrates how indispensable Thrasymachus is—not the stupid bully he appears to be, but the man who knows the language that pleases the masses. And the older Plato, nearing his end, has no qualms about pleading for a *dilution of truth*, for a *dilution of natural right*, giving up the dream of an absolute rule of the wise and setting up, instead, a mysteriously composed senate of magistrates ("men remarkable for their capacity for science, for their moral propensities and habits"), who assemble at night and whose competence Plato himself calls *divine*. It suddenly seems as if Machiavelli had made only one mistake: to lay bare the fact that the tools of the political trade are hidden constraint and cunning.

The fourth lesson that Strauss draws from classical philosophy completes his personal vision of Greek wisdom. Unlike the celebrated Karl Popper, Strauss staunchly adheres to the Greek idea that any healthy society is, if not a radically, at least a reasonably closed society—and a small one, at that. Leaving the Stoics in the shadows, Strauss reads through the Platonic or Aristotelean lines an implicit disavowal of any *general society of mankind*. He flatly assumes the constant need in any society for that class of warriors Plato was so famously fond of. (Globalists, provided they know how to read, do probably shriek in horror, and with good reason, for an open or comprehensive society of mankind "can only exist on a

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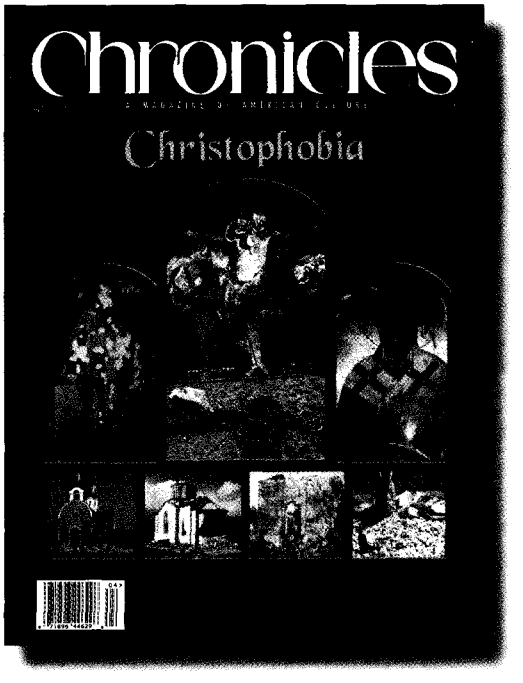

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lower level of humanity.") Strauss apparently echoes the very classical idea that a healthy society must be small enough for all citizens to be able to maintain at least potential links. ("A city is a community commensurate with man's natural powers of firsthand or direct knowledge . . . with his power of love or of active concern, which is by nature limited.") Citizens must be friends, Aristotle used to say. At the same time, there is an obvious gap between the third and fourth lessons, between defending the necessity of civil friendship and that of governing one's fellow citizens by pure deceit or cunning demagoguery. So obviously, Strauss's closed society does not refer to any contemporary Western societies; he has in mind a particular type of nation whose historical embodiment remains to be determined. And this nation, which embodies the "natural affection that men have especially for their kin," he intends to defend by all means:

> There are no assignable limits on what might be just reprisals: there are situations in which the normally valid rules of justice are justly changed, or exceptions are as just as the rules: justice is mutable so as to be able to cope with the inventiveness of wickedness.

To summarize, modernity is wicked; classical paganism, salutary. The former deprives mankind of all natural notions of human dignity and nobility and ends up giving birth, at best, to a society of lawless pigs and, at worst, to totalitarian societies. The latter extols the essence of man, and, even if it fails to communicate respect for its standards to the masses, it at least gives the wise a chance to rule the unwise, thereby promoting a society in which man can survive.

This much is absolutely clear: To Strauss, what is admirable about classical philosophy is that, in its effort to save mankind from decaying, it does not rely on any notion that is even remotely theological; it manages to "avoid the Charybdis of relativism" without falling prey to the "Scylla of absolutism." Classical philosophers know that men need rules, but they are reasonable men who do not, like fanatical obscurantists, look up to the skies and wait for these rules to rain down upon them. In other words, the Greeks invented philosophy as the unrelenting effort of human reason to discover those reasonable rules that mankind, by nature, needs—rules whose authority is none other than that of man's reason, but is, at the same time, as indisputable as reason itself. That is to say, rules that depend totally on what man is but are totally independent of his essentially mutable and unthinking will, and of the essentially fallible, intellectual grasp of most men; rules that some men have been able to dig up, not because they were supermen—their quest is endless; their sagacity, constantly put to the test; and, after all, they are only men—but because they approximate the essence of man better than others.

Where are today's Platos and Aristotles?

Corresponding editor Claude Polin is a professor at the University of Paris-Sorbonne.

FOREIGN POLICY

Kosovo and Its Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy

by Joseph E. Fallon

The struggle for Kosovo between Christian Serbs and Muslim Albanians dates back to 1389, when the Serbs were defeated by, and their lands annexed to, the Ottoman Empire. Muslim rule lasted over four centuries and resulted in several waves of forced migrations of Serbs from Kosovo. The current Albanian majority there was achieved more recently—the result of the policies of the Axis occupation (1941-45), which included the killing of an estimated 10,000 Serbs, the expulsion of another 100,000, and the introduction of Albanian settlers. The de-Serbianization of Kosovo continued under Tito's rule (1945-80), during which the country acquired many attributes of a separate Albanian state—borders, a flag, a capital, a supreme court, an education system that promoted the Albanian language, a university with teachers and textbooks from Albania, as well as cultural and sporting exchanges with Albania. In 1981, after Tito's death, Albanians in Kosovo demanded that the province be elevated to a republic with the right of secession. This provoked a Serbian reaction that facilitated the rise of Slobodan Milosevic, which, in turn, was cited by Albanians as a justification for the activities of the Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). A downward spiral of ethnic suspicion and strife ensued, culminating in the Yugoslav wars.

From 1996 to 1999, the war in Kosovo was an internal conflict between the secessionist KLA—which, at one time, was designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department—and the armed forces of the rump Yugoslavia of Serbia and Montenegro.

Citing an alleged massacre of Albanian civilians by Serbian forces in the village of Racak in January 1999, the U.S. government and NATO allies officially intervened. Meeting in Rambouillet, France, that February and March, they drafted a "peace accord," which offered the KLA *de facto* independence for Kosovo immediately, and *de jure* independence in three years. During that interval, Kosovo would be administered as a NATO protectorate. The U.S. government introduced a military annex to the accord under which NATO personnel would be immune from all legal actions—civil, criminal, or administrative—and NATO forces would have unfettered access to any and all parts of Yugoslavia. And all the costs would be borne by Belgrade. Yugoslavia would have been a virtual colony of NATO.

When Belgrade refused to sign the accord, NATO attacked. The war lasted from March 24 to June 10, 1999. Kosovo became a U.N. protectorate (UNMIK), whose final status—some form of independence from Serbia—would be determined in the future. That future is now, and it is posing political and strategic problems for the Bush administration.

U.S. foreign policy toward Kosovo, which culminated in military intervention in 1999, was a continuation of the policy Washington had pursued in Bosnia and Croatia in 1995. Each of the three wars contributed to a profound transformation in U.S. foreign policy. In Washington's eyes, the end of the Cold War meant a transition from a bipolar world, which functioned within a set of political, military, and legal restraints, to a unipolar one. The U.S. government was now the world's hyperpower, without rival or limitation. For Washington, the Yugoslav wars provided an opportunity to demonstrate this to the rest of the world, thereby accomplishing several key objectives.

First, Washington set out to demonize the Serbs in order to discredit and suppress not just Serbian ethnicity but any manifestation of ethnic nationalism,

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since such nationalism undermines the legitimacy of the dominant ideology of the virtues of multiethnic states and transnational corporations.

Second, U.S. policymakers sought to dismember an inconvenient state—in this case, one supported by Russia, thereby establishing a precedent. Later, that precedent would be applied to the union of Serbia and Montenegro, then Serbia, and, perhaps, even to Iran. In so doing, Washington hoped to weaken and isolate Russia, both internationally and in Europe.

It also established another precedent, in promoting ethnic cleansing by proxy. The Clinton administration covertly armed, trained, supported, and advised the government of Croatia for the August 1995 military offensive known as Operation Storm. Though it was aimed at the secessionist Republic of Serbian Krajina, it resulted in the expulsion of an estimated 300,000 Serbs from Croatia. According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), after ten years, the Serbs still have not been permitted to return to Croatia. The precedent was repeated in 1999 when the Red Cross reported that the KLA had expelled between 200,000 and 250,000 Serbs from Kosovo. It was repeated yet again in 2001 in Afghanistan, in the wake of the U.S. invasion, when our "ally," the Northern Alliance, consisting mostly of ethnic Tajiks, sought to expel a million ethnic Pashtuns from northern Afghanistan. According to the UNHCR, nearly 100,000 Pashtuns fled, becoming refugees either elsewhere in Afghanistan or in Pakistan. In Iraq, both Kurdish and Shiite militias, whose political parties are members of the national government—another ally of the Bush administration—currently engage in ethnic cleansing. In Kirkuk, Kurds are reversing the process of "Arabization," while in Baghdad, Shiites are cleansing Sunni neighborhoods.

Aaron D. Wolf

By supporting Muslim demands for a united Bosnia and an independent Kosovo, Washington hoped to persuade Muslims, especially in Egypt, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey—all key U.S. allies—that they are wrong to regard U.S. foreign policy toward Palestinians, Kashmiris, Moros, and Uighurs as evidence of any hostility toward Islam on our part.

Washington also sought to encourage Muslims in Albania, Bosnia, and Kosovo to promote a secularized, individualistic Islam, in which mosque and state are separate, which would undermine the appeal of traditional Islam, especially in the West.

With the Cold War ended, Washington sought to justify NATO's continued existence by waging war on Bosnia and Kosovo. These wars required a radical redefinition of NATO's mission and area of responsibility. These *ad hoc* military interventions became official policy after September 11. NATO's 2002 Prague Summit Declaration stated,

> We, the Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the North Atlantic Alliance, met today to enlarge our Alliance and further strengthen NATO to meet the grave new threats and profound security challenges of the 21st century . . . so that NATO can better carry out the full range of its missions and respond collectively to those challenges, including the threat posed by terrorism and by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery . . . NATO must be able to field forces that can move quickly to wherever they are needed . . . to sustain operations over distance and time . . . to achieve their objectives.

Thus, NATO is no longer a defensive alliance, and its sphere is no longer restricted to Europe. This enables the U.S. government to maintain, even increase, its Cold War level of influence in Europe and provides Washington with a reservoir of bases and troops from NATO countries to help implement its policy objectives as far away as Afghanistan and Iraq.

In attacking Yugoslavia, Washington also sought to test the ability of the U.S. government to impose political settlements that advance its interests. The more contradictory and arbitrary those settlements are—rejecting national self-determination in Bosnia but championing it in Kosovo—the more our power is projected.

The final status of Kosovo is to be decided by the U.N. Security Council. Its special envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, a former president of Finland, is reportedly recommending independence in all but name. (See *www.unosek.org/unosek/index.html*.) The Serbs have rejected this plan, and, while Moscow has stated that it will veto this recommendation unless both the Serbs and the Albanians agree to it, Washington favors it. Such a plan, if implemented, would fail to bring peace or justice to that region of the Balkans.

Any U.N. Security Council decision is expected to reflect "The Guiding Principles for a Settlement of Kosovo's Status" set out in 2005 by the United States, England, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia—collectively known as the Contact Group. Principle Six declares that "There will be no changes in the current territory of Kosovo, i.e. no partition of Kosovo and no union of Kosovo with any country or part of any country."

The current proposal for Kosovo independence violates international law while claiming to uphold it; it institutionalizes ethnic and religious discrimination and seeks to sanction both in law, denying the Christian Serbs of Kosovo the legal right to national self-determination, while granting *and* denying that right to the Muslim Albanians of Kosovo.

If national self-determination under international law forbids the partition of a territory, then U.N. member-states Bangladesh, Ireland, Israel, Moldova, Pakistan, and all the successor states of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia are illegitimate. So, too, are the western borders of U.N. member-states Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, which were shaped by the post-World War II partition of Germany.

The plan both allows Albanians in Kosovo the right to secede from Serbia and denies them the right to unite with Albania. If the U.N. Security Council insists this restriction is in accordance with international law on the right to national self-determination, then it should also insist that the unifications of Germany, Vietnam, and Yemen were illegal, and future unifications of Ireland or Korea would have to be prohibited as well. Conversely, it would have to consider the Republic of Somaliland, which

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seceded from Somalia, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which seceded from Cyprus—states the United Nations refuses to recognize—to be, in fact, legitimate.

The plan advocates multiethnic statehood while dismembering a multiethnic state. The push for Kosovo independence is predicated upon it being a multiethnic state. As part of Serbia, however, it is already in one. By championing the concept of multiethnicity, the proposal undermines not only its own justification for Kosovo's independence but the legitimacy of all the successor states to the former Yugoslavia: Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Slovenia—none of which are as multiethnic or as multireligious as was the former Yugoslavia.

Both Bosnia and Serbia constitute federal republics. Bosnia consists of two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republika Srpska. Serbia has two autonomous provinces: Kosovo-Metohija and Vojvodina. Both Bosnia and Kosovo are U.N. protectorates. Yet, Muslim Kosovo is to gain independence, while Christian Republika Srpska faces abolition and consolidation in a unitary Bosnian state. Such a policy is nothing short of institutionalized ethnic and religious discrimination.

The Security Council claims that Kosovo is an exception in international law. The legal principles announced for it are deemed to have no applicability to other disputes. This maneuver is an attempt to deny the protection of international law to parties in three specific conflicts—Transnistria in Moldova, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. Such an arbitrary claim of exceptionality undermines the moral authority of international law, making it nothing more than a law of the jungle defined and enforced for the benefit of the more powerful states.

A just and enduring political settlement for Kosovo requires that Bosnia be treated in an identical manner. If Kosovo has the right to secede from Serbia, then the Republika Srpska must have the right to secede from Bosnia.

An independent Kosovo must have the right to unite with Albania. Similarly, an independent Republika Srpska must have the right to unite with Serbia.

To resolve the Serbian refugee crisis, there should be a population exchange between Serbia and Montenegro, on the one hand, and Kosovo and Albania, on the other. Serbian refugees would agree not to return to Kosovo, while the Serbs still there would agree to relocate to Serbia. In exchange, Albanians in Serbia and Montenegro would relocate to Kosovo and Albania. There is a legal precedent for this in the "Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations" (1923). With the approval of the international community, it successfully transferred over a million Greeks from Turkey to Greece and 400,000 Turks from Greece to Turkey. Other examples of successful population transfers include those between Bulgaria and Turkey in 1913 and 1950-89; Bulgaria and Greece in 1919; Poland and the Soviet Union in 1945; and Czechoslovakia and Hungary in 1946.

The Bush administration favors the current proposal for Kosovo's independence without appreciating the problems, political and strategic, it presents to U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, the White House is behaving as if the United States, as the world's hyperpower, can overcome any problems that may arise—a notion that Afghanistan and Iraq should have dispelled.

The immediate problem is that Kosovo, perhaps more than Bosnia, has become a haven for Islamic militants and for organized crime. Both pose direct threats to Europe, and independence will only make it worse—for Europe and for the "War on Terror."

If the Security Council proposal is implemented, the secessionist regimes of Transnistria in Moldova, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, will demand international recognition of their independence. Such official recognition would likely begin with Russia and then snowball. Since the Bush administration opposed independence for these regions, this would be viewed by many, including many Americans, as a political victory for Moscow and a political defeat for Washington.

Next would be Nagorno-Karabakh. The Armenians there will also insist on international recognition of their independence from Azerbaijan—something that both Turkey and Azerbaijan oppose. Armenian-Americans, however, support it, and they constitute an influential ethnic lobbying group. The Bush administration would be caught in the middle, and any decision would displease an important ally.

The strategic prize, however, is the Crimea, which has been part of Russia since 1783. With the Bolshevik Revolution, it became an autonomous republic, then an oblast of the Russian SFSR. In 1954, jurisdiction was transferred to the Ukrainian SSR as a symbolic gesture honoring the historic unity of the two Slavic peoples. When the Soviet Union fell, the Crimea reluctantly agreed to remain part of the Ukraine, but as an autonomous republic. Ethnically, linguistically, and culturally, the Crimea is Russian. It is home to the Russian Black Sea Fleet. If the U.N. Security Council votes on independence for Kosovo, the government of the Crimea would likely call for a vote on Crimean independence, which would easily pass, then demand international recognition. This would be followed by a vote on union with Russia. And Moscow would certainly accept the return of the Crimea to Russia.

This would be a major defeat for U.S. foreign policy. Since the Yugoslav wars of the 90's, Washington has assumed that Russia, because of her size, natural resources, and nuclear weapons, has the potential to reemerge as a rival. To prevent this, the U.S. government has pursued a policy of containment. It supported the expansion of NATO eastward to include former Soviet republics, in violation of promises made to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. The anticipated impact of NATO enlargement, however, was trumped by Russia's emergence as a principal supplier of oil and natural gas to Europe. Washington used the war in Afghanistan to displace Russia from the former Soviet Central Asian republics. After its initial success, which culminated in Kyrgyzstan's "Tulip Revolution," the U.S. government has seen its influence decline, while Russia's has grown. In the Ukraine's "Orange Revolution," Washington supported the overthrow of a pro-Russian government and its replacement with a pro-American one. The new government soon announced its intention to join NATO and to expel Russia's Black Sea Fleet from the Crimea—to humiliate Moscow and disrupt its naval operations. Then, a general election replaced that government with another pro-Russian one. If independence for Kosovo results in the return of the Crimea to Russia, U.S. foreign policy will have come full circle since the Yugoslav wars. The world would no longer be unipolar, and the U.S. government would no longer be the world's hyperpower.

Joseph E. Fallon writes from Rye, New York.

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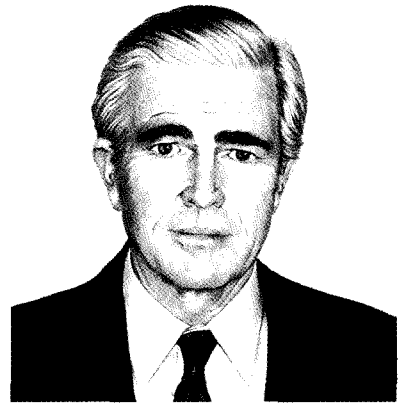
by George McCartney

In the Register of *Ka-ching!*



The Hoax

Produced and distributed by Miramax Films
Directed by Lasse Hallstrom
Screenplay by William Wheeler

With *The Hoax*, Swedish director Lasse Hallstrom and his screenwriter, William Wheeler, have at long last given Clifford Irving his due. They have done so by portraying their subject with about as much honesty as Irving did Howard Hughes when he concocted his infamous fake autobiography of the billionaire. They have altered, misshaped, abridged, and invented. In short, they have lied, exuberantly. While I've frequently chided directors and writers for such shenanigans, I cannot stir myself to moral indignation in this case. By thumbing their noses at the facts, Hallstrom and Wheeler have aspired to a higher truthiness, as Stephen Colbert might say. Their narrative method can be understood as a gloss on Irving's own fusion of reckless imagination and shameless chutzpah. As such, it pays fitting tribute to a literary scoundrel while exposing the dunces in high places who allowed him to get as far as he did.

Playing Irving, Richard Gere sets the tone of this satire when he explains to his friend and accomplice Richard Suskind (Alfred Molina) how he conned the editors at McGraw-Hill and *Time*. His technique is simplicity itself. "The more outrageous I sound," he gleefully confides, "the more convincing I am!"

Of course, compared to Irving, Hallstrom and Wheeler are pikers in the lying department, but they have tried admirably. They portray Irving in 1971 as a financially strapped novelist about to be evicted from his Upstate New York home. Undaunted by looming indigence, he dons a tuxedo to attend Truman Capote's masked Black and White Ball at the Plaza Hotel, where he meets his editor, played by the winsomely elegant Hope Davis. She takes the festive occasion to inform him that his latest manuscript, *Rudnick's Problem*, has been rejected. She doesn't say why, but we are left to infer that it is because it's such a transparent attempt to cash in on Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*. To add to Irving's gathering gloom, he glimpses his former and still ominous mistress Nina von Pallandt, the singing baroness, across the celebrity-crowded room. All this is presented in a skillfully marshaled montage orchestrated to make Irving's plunge into charlatanism seem all but inevitable. There is a slight difficulty, however: None of it is true. As of 1971, Irving had been residing on the Mediterranean island of Ibiza for nine years, and he was reasonably well off. As for Capote's party, it was held five years earlier, in 1966. Furthermore, as far as I can discover, Irving never tried his hand—his literary hand, that is—at Portnoy's enthusiasm.

Why these deviations from the truth? I can only think that Wheeler was impatient with the reality. He wanted an Irving driven by economic desperation and goaded by being just outside the literary world's magic showroom, his nose flattened against its glittering pane. This would seem to make for a better story. But, as so often happens, the truth is far more interesting. Irving had been publishing with McGraw-Hill for 12 years, had cultivated good relations with his editors, and had recently signed a four-book contract. He had every reason to expect a successful future. Yet he preferred to gamble these enviable prospects on a lunatic criminal venture that promised shaky odds at best. Why?

I recall being puzzled by the affair when the news first broke in. How, I had wondered, did Irving expect to get away with it? Prompted by the film, I've done a little research and now see how a clever but fatally self-absorbed New York wise guy could be mightily tempted to perpetrate such a scam. First, the mysterious Hughes was hot, profitable copy. There were three biographies of the aviator turned womanizing showman written between 1967 and 1971, each woven from generally available information, tabloid gossip, and sordid speculation. Second, Hughes hadn't made a public appearance or statement since 1957. Only an inner circle of his upper-echelon employees knew with any certainty where he was living, and many of his factotums hadn't seen him face to face for over a decade. Third—and this is crucial—Irving had hit the mother lode of genuine Hughesiana. He had stolen the unpublished memoirs of Hughes' former chief executive officer, the 80-year-old Noah Dietrich, who had worked for the great man for 32 years and knew where the bodies were buried. Fourth, Hughes was rumored to be near death. This last detail almost certainly clinched the matter. Irving must have calculated that, once Hughes had taken off on his final flight, there would be no one who could convincingly debunk his as-told-to autobiography.

Let's not overlook the fabulously foolish executives at McGraw-Hill. On this score, Wheeler's script shines with a wicked sheen. Despite initial doubts and ongoing suspicions, these ladies and gentlemen became the unwitting—or is that witless?—co-conspirators in Irving's fraud. The first to fall under Irving's spell was his editor, a Chinese-American woman whom the film has unaccountably transformed into a disconcertingly round-eyed Davis. When she learns that Irving has reeled in the Big Kahuna, she chortles hyperbolically that "this book will sell more copies than the Bible." Like so many in her industry, she's clearly convinced that sales volume is the only criterion for a book's worth. Harold McGraw, aging grandson of the McGraw who founded the house, has doubts about the project, however. Although a professional handwriting analyst has certified the authenticity of Irving's forged letters from Hughes to himself, he's put off by the fictional Hughes's supposed demands for more and more money. (Once Irving thought he had the publishing house hooked, he couldn't resist having his imaginary Hughes escalate his original demand for $400,000 to

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$1 million, the check to be transmitted to him by Irving himself since, of course, Hughes wasn't about to reveal his whereabouts. "It's sleazy," McGraw complains to the company's CEO, Shelton Fisher (a marvelously calculating Stanley Tucci). McGraw then makes what seems at first a needless declaration: "I'm a publisher." But this is not a job description. He is invoking the moral standards to which his trade is supposedly committed. Made of sterner stuff, Fisher all but yawns in McGraw's face. "You're an employee, Harold," he reminds the older man, belittlingly. "Roll the presses." And so they did—only to become book burners when the truth emerged. Here is the film's satiric target: The hypocritical calculus with which modern publishing balances morality with greed. Hallstrom has made of Irving a lens to expose this deliciously unsavory stew of everyday corruption among both the knowing and the deluded. His film reminds us that publishers, as their title implies, exert enormous control over our public discourse. It is not surprising, then, that they should be jealous of their power and strive to protect their prerogatives under a mantle of moral seriousness, especially when they are most devoted to turning a buck. At all costs, they must be believed. How else can they prevent the public from snickering unprofitably at the ghost-written ruminations to be found in the Oprah-endorsed memoirs of our political leaders, each a study in studied sincerity?

Hallstrom has been exceptionally well served by his cast. Richard Gere creates a five-foot-ten version of the six-foot-four Irving, thus implicitly cutting him down to size. I've never thought much of Gere as an actor. Perhaps this is because of the roles he has chosen. He has always seemed to me to emanate a sleazy self-assurance that's as much personal as thespian. He reminds me of a clever *roué* who is just self-regarding enough to remain unscathed by his debaucheries. But here, made to resemble Irving under a kinked coiffure and behind an enlarged proboscis, Gere uses his slippery persona to great effect. He makes Irving the kind of liar who is so obvious that you can't help doubting your instinctive distrust. No one would be quite so brazen. His Irving is a manipulative wonder, spinning stories of meeting Hughes in Mexico and Puerto Rico, which we watch unfold in hue-drained color-film stock, suggesting the source of these scenes to be the more shadowy recesses of his larcenous brain.

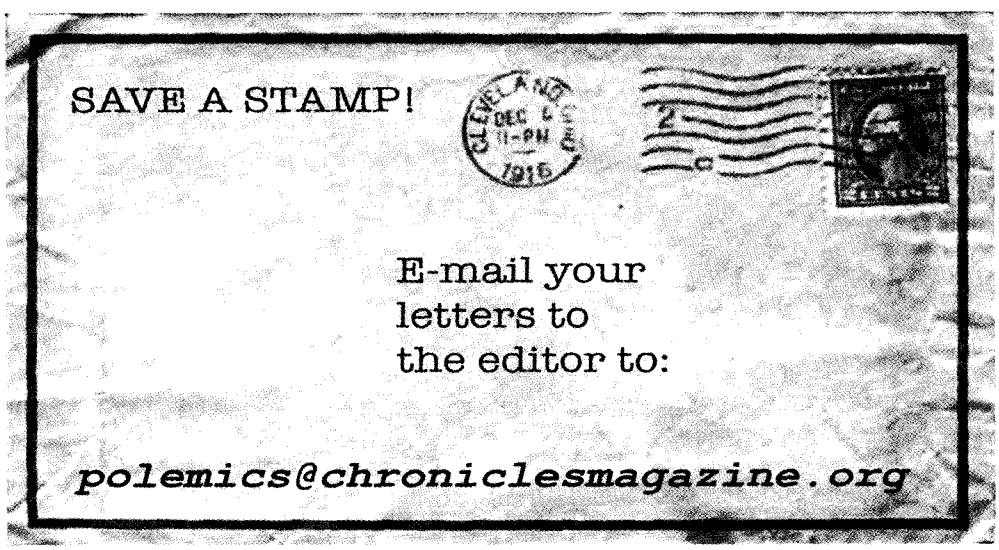
One scene perfectly reveals Irving's devious showmanship. He's at McGraw-Hill's offices with his accomplice Suskind, talking up his interviews with Hughes. As if from nowhere, Suskind interrupts Irving while he's in full fictional tilt. "Prune," Suskind blurts. The general conversation ceases as every eye turns toward him. "He gave me a prune," he continues unhelpfully, staring back at the puzzled faces. After an awkward pause, Irving smoothly resumes control. When they met Hughes in Mexico, he explains, they found the hypochondriacal billionaire sitting cross-legged on his net-tented bed, from which dais he lectured them on the virtues of organic produce, offering Suskind a single prune to prove his point.

Although Suskind helped Irving pull off his scam, he was never in the same league as a supposed friend. Irving hustled him into his scheme to do the donkey work of research. Accordingly, Molina plays Suskind as a comical plodder hopelessly out of step with the glib Irving. This makes Suskind the perfect foil to reveal Irving's talent for the scam, and Molina has seized the opportunity to provide the film's biggest laughs. At the same time, Hallstrom never lets the fun obscure what a bastard Irving is—a man who does not hesitate to fast-talk his slow-witted friend into taking part in his high-stakes criminal plot. Nor does Irving scruple to involve his wife, Edith (Marcia Gay Harden). She's a Swiss national, and he makes use of her to set up a bank account in Geneva under the name H.R. Hughes, so she can cash the advance checks McGraw-Hill draws to the phantom Hughes. For their assistance, Suskind and Edith were convicted along with Irving. Suskind did 5 months; Edith, 14; Irving, 17.

Irving, of course, is a survivor. Undeterred by his disgrace, he has gone on to publish novels and journalism, including *The Hoax*, the account of the Hughes affair that Hallstrom has used for his film. What's more, you can visit his website and download the offending tome itself, *The Autobiography of Howard Hughes*, for $5.95. I've scanned the opening chapters, which Irving has graciously made available for free. They seem to me so self-evidently fraudulent that I'm amazed the McGraw-Hill brass didn't do time alongside their errant author for the crime of willfully believing him. Irving repeatedly quotes his Hughes so as to build a firewall between the book and suspicions of fraud. He has Hughes insist on absolute secrecy, firmly establishing that no one in his company, none of his attorneys or advisors, is to know anything about the project. Quite convenient. Then, more entertainingly, there are the passages in which Irving compares himself to Hughes in order to celebrate his own accomplishments as an author and a man. "We were both tall—Hughes nearly six foot three and I an inch taller. Tall men instinctively understand each other's physical stance, the still-living memory of adolescent awkwardness, the vulnerability." Nice touch, that taller.

Elsewhere, we're treated to Hughes' assessment of Irving. "You're an outsider, of a sort—a kind of cultivated maverick. . . . That's probably why I get along with you. I have to like any man who goes his own way."

How could the McGraw-Hill people not have heard in Irving's self-infatuated grandiosity the voice of a venal fabulist? Easy. Their ears were ringing with the sound a well-fed register makes: *Ka-ching!* c



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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Witness Un-Protection Program

Abdul Kahn's face had remained entirely expressionless throughout the forty-five minutes required to get the wireless router that connected the three computers in the house back up and running, yet Héctor felt as certain that he had been recognized by the other man as he was in making his own identification.

He'd experienced an excruciating three-quarters of an hour, therefore, tinkering with the settings on each of the three machines, the router, and the cable modem, while endeavoring never to turn his back on Kahn while he worked, keeping him in sight at all times. Even so, he was expecting, at any moment, an ornate dagger in the back, a jeweled scimitar across the base of the neck. Who knew how many terrorists were numbered in this cell, and whether there might be others lurking in the rest of the house, around corners and in the darkened hallway? The place resembled exactly the grim dens whose images were broadcast periodically by Al Jazeera after a kidnapping followed by a threat of beheading: blankets pinned behind the windows; minimal furniture; bare, grimed walls; a few thin bamboo mats scattered about on the floor; and, off in the corners here and there, a hookah or a cezve surrounded by cups and saucers. Had Héctor been familiar with "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," the house might have reminded him of the brigands' cave in the forest, minus the heaps of treasure. As for Kahn, he seemed equally determined to keep the repairman under close surveillance, hovering so close at times that Héctor was able to catch the thin odor of water-strained tobacco in the matted beard growing about the long, yellow teeth. Without doubt, these computers harbored among them evidence of a multitude of satanic plots and schemes aimed at destroying America and spreading Islam throughout the world. One careless move on his part—one accidental flicker of the screen exposing dark secrets never intended for his eyes, or those of any other infidel—and the next instant, his head would be rolling among the coffee things on the floor. Still, he completed his work without mishap, wrote out a bill for the job, and accepted payment in cash from Kahn, escaping the house with no damage beyond the burning imprint of the *jihadista*'s dark, expressionless eyes upon his soul.

Immediately upon leaving No. 11 Callista Street, Héctor canceled his remaining afternoon appointments and drove directly to the police station, where he gave his story to the deputy chief—Saenz was gone from the office that afternoon—and demanded that he and his family be placed immediately in the Witness Protection Program. The deputy, a pudgy Anglo named Corcoran with a roll of fat at the back of his neck and poured into a too-tight uniform, looked bored as he heard him out, seemingly unimpressed by his account. The request for protection he dismissed with what seemed to Héctor unnecessary contempt.

"WPP is for the really *big* fish," Deputy Chief Corcoran informed him. "We'll check your story out, buddy, and decide if you're one of them, or ain't." His small sneer and sarcastic tone suggested he himself had little doubt on that score.

Héctor, who'd expected his timely witness to be more than sufficient to prevent another catastrophic terrorist strike on the Rio Grande, was appalled by this laconic response.

"But it *had* to have been Kahn and his friend who fired the Qassam at the Taberna," he protested. "Those computers I worked on are probably connected with other terrorist cells—maybe even Al Qaeda itself! And what if me and my wife and kids get blown to bits by *another* rocket before you guys get around to checking out my story? What you need to do is round up a couple of men and go over there to Callista Street—*pronto*—and have a look for yourselves!"

Deputy Chief Corcoran's gaze was now definitely hostile.

"You ever hear of any such thing as a search warrant, *Señor* Villa? This ain't Mexico, you know. Cops can't go around arresting illegal immigrants on our own. That's the federal government's job, even if they don't do nothing about it. What do you think the ACLU would do to us if we up and grabbed this guy on just anybody's say-so?"

On the way out of the station, though he took the paper at home, Héctor deposited a quarter in the box and extracted a copy of the *Valencia County News-Bulletin*. The photo above the fold showed the Taberna Aztlán as a smoldering ruin, and the lead story described plans to rebuild the place on location behind a defiant façade inset with 1,776 beer bottles cemented in rows. "Millions for tribute, not one cent for protection," he thought sardonically. It was a phrase he'd come across soon after crossing the border and remembered ever since. It had the genuine American ring to it, Héctor thought, like the Gettysburg Address or the Liberty Bell. He was highly disappointed in Deputy Chief Corcoran's thoroughly un-American response in the course of their interview.

His own first impulse in the crisis had been to do whatever was in his power to protect his country. Having fulfilled that duty, Héctor felt that his immediate responsibility now was for the preservation of his family—apparently, without the aid and cooperation of the law. For the moment, he hadn't the slightest idea how this task was to be accomplished, while whatever plan he decided on was certain to meet with the hysterical reaction of his wife when she learned that the Villas were in actual, rather than potential, danger. As he needed to inform Jesús "Eddie" at once of his run-in with Abdul Kahn and unsympathetic reception by the deputy police chief, Héctor thought he would use the occasion to seek his friend's advice on protecting his family. Possibly Jesús "Eddie" would feel some alarm on his own behalf, but Héctor doubted it. Nor did he find alarm justified, since, the more Kahn tried to recall what Héctor's companion at the Taberna Aztlán had looked like, the more likely he was to see Héctor—and only Héctor—seated there among shadows in the

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half-dark. He tried Jesús "Eddie" on his cellphone and found him in Paco's Place downtown.

"Ah, *compadrito*," Jesús "Eddie" exclaimed, "the murdering sonsa*bit*ches that destroyed our Taberna and forced us to drink in a dump like this deserve to be caught as soon as *pos*sible and have their *cojones* fed to the pigs! Come on down here, *compinche*, and drink a couple beers with me. The Corona's the same, anyway, and plenty cheaper than what that *ladrón* at the Taberna used to charge."

Paco's Place, on West Reinken Avenue, was a quarter or less the size of the Taberna Aztlán, with room for a single widescreen TV only. Héctor discovered Jesús "Eddie" seated at a table before it, with his feet up on a chair and a basket of popcorn beside him on the table. Jesús "Eddie's" basketball team was way behind, and already the carpet surrounding the screen lay under a thick covering of flung popcorn.

"You, a soccer fan, are lucky, *hombre*, to care nothing for these American games. Living in America, you do not have to watch your team lose time after time, week after week—*bastardos*!" Jesús "Eddie" interrupted himself, hurling another handful of corn at the unfortunate players.

Héctor, always sensitive to his inability to appreciate the sports so dear to his fellow Americans, said nothing. Instead, he drew back a chair on the same side of the table as Jesús "Eddie," out of the direct line of fire, and took a handful of popcorn himself.

"S'up, *hermano*?" Jesús "Eddie" inquired. "You look like you just got fingered to run for office *again*."

As he had never credited Jesús "Eddie" with being the sensitive or observant type, Héctor had to conclude that a compound of misery and fear must be smeared across his features like a facial. So be it, he told himself: He was not, in any event, the kind of *hombre* to beat around the bush.

"I met one of the terrorists from the Taberna Aztlán this afternoon," Héctor explained. "As a matter of fact, I spent almost an hour with him at his house, working on his computers. The name is Abdul Kahn. I recognized him the moment I walked in the door. He recognized me, too."

Jesús "Eddie," grunting in indignation, half-rose from his seat to fling a double fistful of popcorn at his favorite team. Then he gave a long, astonished whistle.

"No shit! The crazy raghead might have killed you! It is a very unlucky thing for you you were recognized, *compadrito*. Now, the terrorists know who to go after when they want to hit some*body*."

This was hardly in the spirit of sympathetic concern and helpfulness Héctor had been expecting.

"They know how to find you, too," he responded sharply. "For all we know, Kahn followed me this evening, on my way over here."

Jesús "Eddie" swallowed his beer the wrong way and sat for a moment, choking and spitting into his cocktail napkin. As soon as he'd recovered, he put the bottle down and took a long, careful look around Paco's Place. Among the Stetsons and gimme caps were a cyclist's helmet and even a Bavarian alpine hat with a feather stuck in the band, but no turbans that either he or Héctor could see.

"We need to get pro*tec*tion from the cops," Jesús "Eddie" said at last.

"I asked about that when I made out my report at the station. The deputy chief said no way. Their Witness Protection is for VIPs only."

"You're a VIP. You ran for Congress."

"Yeah I did. And lost." Nothing, Héctor had learned to his regret, is so American as celebrity—except the abysmal obscurity that inevitably follows its loss.

Jesús "Eddie" sat in silence for several minutes, ignoring both the TV screen and the popcorn bowl.

"This is serious business, *hombre*," he concluded.

"Yeah, tell me about it."

"Looks to me like the Juárezes and the Villas better migrate for a spell, until the cops pick up these two guys."

"I had the same idea. Only where would we migrate to?"

"That's the question, that's the question . . . "

Jesús "Eddie" sat back and closed his eyes. Héctor himself could have used a double shot of tequila, but the service at Paco's Place left something to be desired, and he found it impossible to get the barman's attention. While he was attempting to do so, Jesús "Eddie" opened his eyes suddenly. "I got it!"

"Got what?"

"My family owns part of an old ranch out on the desert halfway between Deming and Columbus, just a house and a few out*build*ings. The ragheads won't never find us there. We'll go south and hang out for a while until they catch these folks and send them away for a long paid vacation at Guan*tan*amo, courtesy of Uncle Sam."

Héctor considered. He was familiar with the general locale: an expanse of sotol and mesquite desert, flat as a drilling pad, sunstricken in summer and swept by cutting winds and sandstorms in winter, whose principal inhabitants were antelope, coyotes, rattlesnakes, and tarantulas. AveMaría, after more than twenty years in the United States, barely tolerated a roadside picnic. And he had a tough time imagining her and the family living under the same roof with the Juárezes. Beatriz had never troubled to disguise her good-natured contempt for Mexicans, illegal ones especially, while AveMaría was deeply disapproving of Jesús "Eddie's" extravagant drinking and of the influence she supposed him to have on her husband.

"How big is this place?" he asked reluctantly.

"Plenty big, plenty big! Why, at one time, my grand*par*ents, aunt and uncle, cousin Elena and their families were all living there to*geth*er! Lots of room for everybody, *compadrito*!"

Héctor sighed inaudibly. It seemed an offer he couldn't refuse. And it would likely not be long—not more than a week or ten days, he expected—before the Belen police, acting on his tip and that of Jesús "Eddie," caught up with Abdul Kahn and his accomplice and put them safely away behind bars.

"OK," he agreed resignedly, "when do we leave?"

"I don't know about the Villas," Jesús "Eddie" told him, "but the Juárezes are out of here early tomorrow *morn*ing—before the next Qassam hits."

The prospect of informing his wife and children that they would be evacuating their house overnight and going off to live indefinitely in the desert, like the Lebanese refugees on TV, seemed to Héctor more daunting even than a tour in Iraq. For courage, therefore, he ordered a final beer, fortified this time by a shot of rye. Had not President Bush called upon all Americans to sacrifice for the cause of freedom? c

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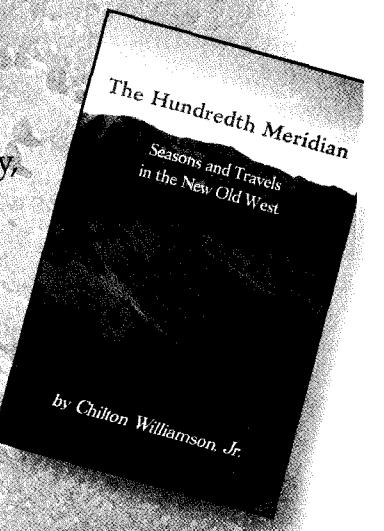
The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Seasons and Travels in the New Old West



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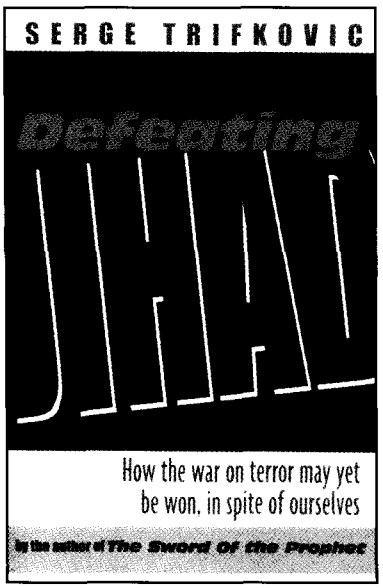
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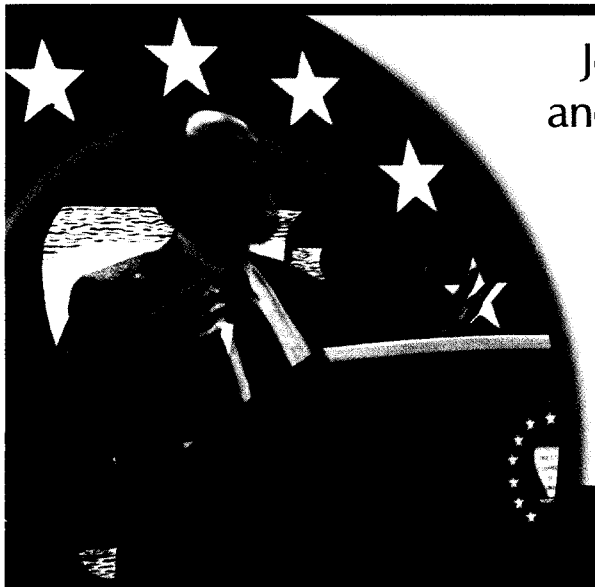

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Fr. Hugh Barbour, O.Praem.

Prior of Saint Michael's Abbey, Silverado, California

Dr. Donald Livingston

Professor of philosophy at Emory University

Dr. James Patrick

Chancellor of the College of Saint Thomas More in Fort Worth, Texas

July 10-15, 2007, in ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS

"The Stuarts and the English Revolution: From 'Charles the Martyr' to William the Dutchman"

Anglo-American political traditions, both liberal and conservative, were forged in the revolutionary struggles of the 17th century. Understanding American history, including our own Revolution and "Civil War," is impossible without an understanding the influential political thinkers this age produced: Hobbes, Filmer, and Locke. And for all the strife and horror of the times, English letters flowered in the works of such men as Defoe, Dryden, Marvell, and Milton. The works of Jeremy Taylor and others made this the last period when English was an important language of theology, but the age also saw the rise of the most lunatic sectarians: Leveler, Diggers, Ranters, and Fifth Monarchists, nutballs that make Pat Robertson seem as wise as Newman.

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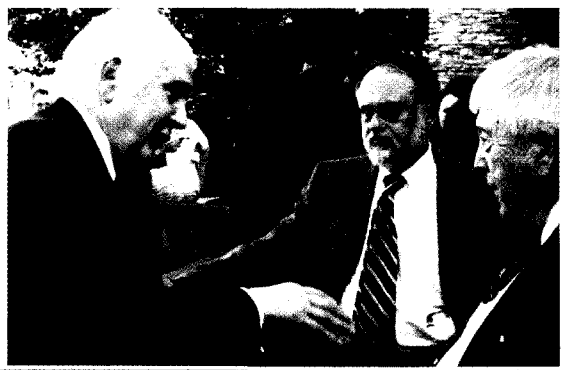

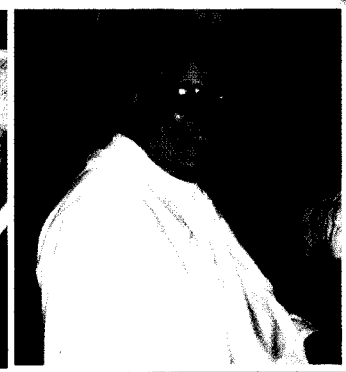

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